Web 2.0: an Overview of the Web-Based Communication Among Latin American Political Parties

INTRODUCTION

Communicating via web is not an unknown endeavor which parties used to frown upon anymore, it has progressively turned into an activity energetically sought by parties and the web has been claiming a bigger share of the political discussion. It is undeniable that any modern political party serious enough as for being considered a viable governmental alternative has some sort of web-based presence. The difference now resides, not in differentiating parties whether they have web presence or not, but rather in the way they use the web and the outcomes it produces.

The advent of the 21st Century brought along some significant challenges in the arena of political communication, among those, the development of web-based applications that enabled the transition between web 1.0 and 2.0, around 2004[1]. Such transition opened a huge window of opportunity for political parties willing to enhance their communication in many ways: broadening their audience, reaching diverse population segments and diversifying their message, something that by the dawn of 2012 hasn't been consolidated yet.

Since its creation as a publicly available tool in 1994, the web has been always changing and evolving and nothing indicates that this tendency is likely to stop in the near future. For instance, in 2008 Barack Obama's presidential campaign showed the use of *state-of-the-art* social networking and became a key component on his victory against John McCain, something that wasn't replicated at the same level in his 2012 incumbent campaign since the novelty of his previous campaign has already faded. As the concept suggests, novelty applications and techniques might give a heads-on advantage to a political party willing to implement them, but such innovations must be continuous if such advantage wants to be maintained.

This chapter aims towards providing an introductory assessment on the situation of web-based communication among Latin American parties. The chapter draws information on a research carried down by the author[2] which analyses the web-presence of all the major political parties in Mexico, Chile and Colombia which give light on some shared regional trends among parties.

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[1] Although many web 2.0 applications already existed before 2004, that date is commonly accepted as marking the birth of the concept of web 2.0 due to the "Web 2.0 Summit" organized by Tim O'Reilly in San Francisco.
[2] The research "Political Parties and Web 2.0 in Latin America" which was presented as Master Thesis in May 2012 at the Hertie School of Governance from Berlin. Retrievable upon request at josue.inteligencias.info

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This chapter is divided in four broad sections which aim towards providing an overview on the web based political communication among Latin American parties. The first section briefly details the nature of web-based communication, why it is important and why is web 2.0 particularly relevant under that context. On the second part, the chapter addresses some common misinterpretations and mistakes about what often "politicians think" is web-based communication. The third section will describe briefly some of the author's findings within Mexico, Chile and Colombia, emphasizing some relevant regional trends. In the final section a conclusion is drawn around the idea of the reality of Latin American parties regarding web-based communication and the necessity of reinventing themselves under the perspective of what is yet to come.

1. WHY COMMUNICATING VIA THE WEB?

Web-usage skeptics have always surrounded political parties, not only among politicians but also among academics. Throughout time, opinions frequently diverged, from those claiming the fallacy of its virtues such as Schwartz[3], to those arguing mixed outcomes from it such as Dahlgren (2005:150)[4]. Despite the level of skepticism, the argument about the web as a space for public political discussion has revolved around Habermas' notion of the "Public Sphere"[5] and the role that the web plays within such space. By reading the academic literature from the 1990's it becomes clear how drastically has the web changed in little less than two decades, a change that accelerated since the advent of web 2.0 and which teaches an important lesson: the web is in a permanent state of change, which permeates to its users and the way they communicate with each other.

Aside from the discussions regarding the way the web evolves, it is unquestionable that parties must communicate though the web and modernize its use, which in this context implies a significant adoption of web 2.0 applications. Narrowing down the question on why Latin American political parties should communicate via web 2.0, there are three important reasons that must be taken into careful consideration:

a. The Professionalization of Political Campaigning, and the Necessity of Permanent Campaigning

Nowadays, parties face the necessity to reach broader audiences simple in order to be able to maintain their popular support, and the web has become an excellent channel for doing it, particularly during periods between elections. Why is this happening? According to some researchers, political campaigning has undergone three different stages or "Eras" up to date, beginning at the dawn of the last Century, and divided in Pre-Modern, Pre-War War and Post-Modern Eras[6]. The transition from one era to the next implied several changes in the way campaigns were waged; what Farrel calls "The three T's – Technology, Technicians and Techniques"[7]. The table below shows the attributes that varied during each of the campaigning stages.

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[3] Shwartz argued back in 1995 on the fallacy of the internet as a forum for a true electronic democracy because "*the internet is filled with many different types of people – skinheads, religious zealots and hormonal teenagers- very few of whom represent the electorate as a whole*"
[4] He explained how internet was both beneficial and damaging for the public sphere in the sense that it "*increases the number of political voices, new modes of political engagement and definitions of what constitutes politics*" while on the other hand it destabilizes modern society by creating "*chaos, inefficiency, unpredictability and so forth*".
[5] Habermas defined back in 1964 the public sphere as "*a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.*"
[6] Gibson & Römmele (2001)
[7] Farrel et al. (2006:129)

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

	Premodern Campaigns	Modern Campaigns	Professional Campaigns
Tools	Print Media, Rallies, Meetings, Foot Soldiers	Broadcast television news, news, news advertisements, polls	Internet, direct mail
Mode / Style	Labor-Intensive, interpersonal, amateur	Capital-intensive, mediated, indirect	Capital-intensive, marketed, targeted, continuous
Orientation to Voter	Mobilizing, voters = loyal partisans	Converting and mobilizing, voters = loyal partisans and floating	Interactive, voters = consumers
Internal Power Distribution	Local-centric	National-centric	Local-/national-centric, bifircation

* Source: Gibson & Römmele (2001) - Reformatted by the author to fit current design

Such professionalization of campaigning, together with the rise of the mass media and the difficulty for assuming party loyalties represent a core reason for explaining why do parties seek so intensively to appeal to different voters segments and how web-based communication has proven to be an effective solution for the modern-day political challenges. The loss of party identification, and the increase on swing voters and late deciders[8] put a stress in the necessity of parties for maintaining a continuous campaign that could prevent the dissolution of citizen's sympathies during the inter-electoral periods, when both budgets and media interest tend to be low. Here is where the web becomes a key ally that could enable political parties to maintain presence and activity among sympathizers with a fraction of the cost it would take to do it in the real world.

b. The Demographic Curve

Latin America is young. Data from the UN on median age depicted in the chart below, shows that Latin America is a region with a large amount of young population compared to "older" developed nations or even developing ones like Russia and China.

MEDIAN AGE (1950-2010)

Major area, region, country	Median age of the total population (years)												
	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
China	23.8	22.1	21.3	20.2	19.7	20.7	22.4	23.9	25.1	27.3	29.7	32.2	34.5
Japan	22.3	23.6	25.5	27.3	28.9	30.4	32.6	35.1	37.4	39.6	41.3	43.1	44.7
India	21.3	20.6	20.1	19.5	19.2	19.7	20.1	20.5	21.1	21.7	22.7	23.9	25.1
Russia	25.0	26.5	27.4	28.5	30.6	30.8	31.3	32.1	33.3	35.0	36.5	37.3	37.9
UK	34.9	35.1	35.5	35.0	34.2	33.9	34.4	35.3	35.8	36.5	37.7	38.8	39.8
France	34.5	32.9	33.0	32.7	32.4	31.6	32.4	33.6	34.8	36.3	37.7	38.9	39.9
Germany	35.4	34.5	34.7	34.4	34.3	35.4	36.4	37.1	37.6	38.3	39.9	42.1	44.3
USA	30.0	30.2	29.6	28.4	28.2	28.8	30.0	31.4	32.9	34.1	35.3	36.2	36.9
Mexico	18.7	17.9	17.2	16.7	16.6	16.8	17.5	18.6	19.9	21.6	23.4	25.1	26.6
Chile	22.2	21.8	20.7	20.1	20.3	21.1	22.6	24.1	25.7	27.1	28.8	30.6	32.1
Colombia	18.7	17.8	17.0	16.6	16.9	17.8	18.9	20.1	21.5	22.6	23.8	25.3	26.8
Central America	18.7	18.0	17.3	16.7	16.7	16.9	17.5	18.4	19.5	20.9	22.5	24.0	25.4
South America	20.4	20.1	19.8	19.4	19.6	20.2	20.9	21.8	22.8	23.9	25.1	26.5	28.2

*Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2011). World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, CD-ROM Edition.

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[8] Among which it has been found that the majority of late deciders belong to a "calculating" category rather than a "capricious" type. McAllister (2002:22)

This observation is important because it reveals not only the presence of a large young voting segment but also that every day, more citizens reach voting age and parties must make an effort to attract them since now in Latin America young voters have the capacity to win the elections,, as opposed to countries like Spain and Germany where the gross of the voter's population revolves around the forty years.

A recent example is that of Mexico, where presidential elections were held in July this year. According to the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) there were 84.6 million registered voters from which 40.3% were 34 or younger and where 13.6 million voters (16.1% of all the voters) had the right to vote for president for the first time.[9]

In addition to that, studies show that the ideal place for reaching young Latin Americans is on the web. As the chart below describes it, is evident that Latin Americans aged 24 and younger spend more time online that their global counterparts.
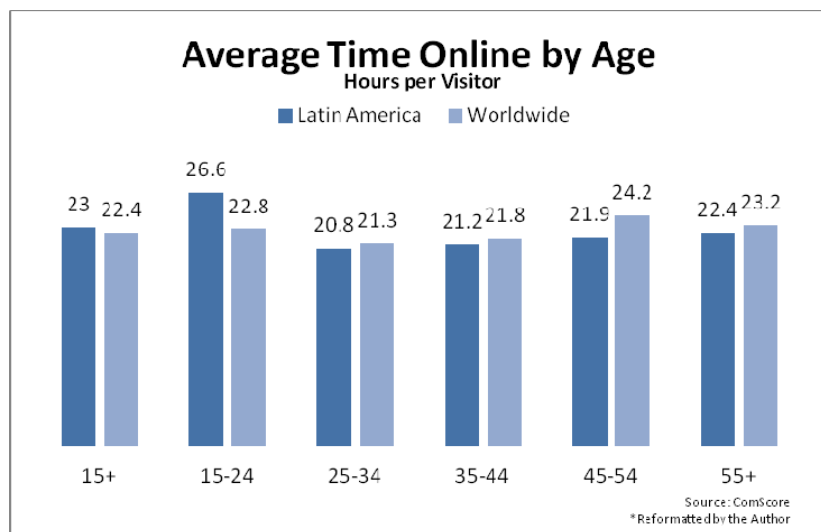
Although the demographic components of the web users in the region vary from country to country[10], it is important to point out the percentage of young voters that are reachable through the web, and how thoroughly have Latin American political parties exploited such segment through their online strategies.

c.   **Closing the Digital Gap and SNS levels of Penetration**

The statistics on growth of internet access and levels of penetration of Social Networking Sites (SNS) in Latin America show that the region is by far, the one with the fastest online population growth rate, where only between 2009 and 2010 the audience grew 23%. The chart below depicts the growth rate of some of the countries of the region, where Colombia showed the largest growth rate by increasing its online population by 36% in one year.[11] Moreover, according to the World Bank[12], while the population with internet access in OECD countries grew 251% between 2000 and 2010, there was a registered average growth of 871% in Latin America, with extraordinary growth rates such as those from Brazil (1416%) and Colombia (1654%).

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[9] Source: http://listanominal.ife.org.mx/ubicamodulo/PHP/est_ge.php?edo=0
[10] Data from ComScore from 2010 showed that 45% of web users in Mexico ranged between 15 to 24 years, contrasting with numbers from other countries such as Argentina (28%) and Chile (26%).
[11] Source: ComScore World Matrix, February 2010 Data
[12] See Annex A

Latin America Online Population
Unique Visitors (ooo) 15+ Accessing from a Home or Work Computer

Country	Feb-2009	Feb-2010	YOY Growth
Brazil	28.608	34.246	+20%
Mexico	12.746	15.164	+19%
Argentina	9.907	12.653	+28%
Colombia	7.511	10.213	+36%
Chile	5.892	6.849	+16%
Venezuela	1.888	2.337	+24%
Puerto Rico	917	1.139	+24%

Source: comScore World Metrix, February 2010 Data

One key component of such rapid growth has to do with the accessibility for acquiring *smartphones*, which detonated social networking activities (particularly Facebook and Twitter) in a region where mobile phone penetration already surpasses 100% in some countries such as Argentina (von Wuthenau 2011:64-65). The rapid growth in internet access, the popularization of smartphones and even cultural frames has turned the region into a hotspot of social media activity. By early October 2012, Facebook announced that it had reached one billion users worldwide and that two of their top five markets were in Latin America, with Brazil ranking 2nd with 54.8 million users and Mexico ranking 5th with 38.3[13]. It is also worth noticing the level of penetration of such sites among the web-users in the region, with percentages such as 89.5 for Chile, 88.3 for Argentina, 87.8 for Venezuela, 87.6 for Colombia, 83.4 for Peru and 82.6 for Mexico while the global average ranges 70% (Fernández 2011:49). With Facebook estimating in 147 million the number of its users in the region, it can be said that one in four Latin Americans has a Facebook account.

The other interesting case is twitter, especially the cases of Brazil and Mexico which went respectively from 3.4 and 1.7 million twitter accounts in December 2010[14], to being ranked 2nd and 7th worldwide by the end of February 2012 with 33 and 11 million users respectively; time by which twitter reported 465 million accounts worldwide.[15]

What these numbers show, is the existence of a steady growth rate in internet access in the region, with millions of users connecting for the first time every month and with users that tend to spend more time online that their global counterparts; here lies a great window of opportunity for political parties seeking to expand its voter's base.

2. COMMON MISTAKES WHILE COMMUNICATING ONLINE

Although internet has become an essential part of the day-to-day life for a large number of Latin Americans, there are still a lot of misconceptions around web-based communication among parties, and in the manner in which parties manage to have a clearer view on what

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[13]Source: http://news.softpedia.com/news/The-Top-5-Countries-on-Facebook-Are-the-US-Brazil-India-Indonesia-and-Mexico-296933.shtml]
[14] Source: http://www.ecualinkblog.com/2010/12/40-millones-de-latinos-en-twitter.html
[15] Source: http://www.blogherald.com/2012/02/22/twitter-2012-infographic/

the web is and what is not, the more effectively they will be able to communicate online. Below there are four common mistakes to which parties must guard off:

a. Trying to Control the Messages Over the Web

Although some countries such as China, Syria and Iran have managed to censor and block websites and access to certain web applications within their territories, the action of "controlling" the web has always been considered incompatible with the very essence of the web. Governments or individuals cannot control the flows of information and interaction because it takes countless shapes and every day adopts new ones as new applications and trends are formed.

Although parties do not actually seek to control the web as a whole, as hierarchical structures they are, they tend to feel more comfortable controlling the message in a top-down approach much to what happens with mass media: the party informs and the voters get informed. With wen 1.0, the approach was essentially similar, the information was controlled by the party and little interaction used to take place among voters and the party official digital infrastructure; namely websites. However, with the rise of prominence of web 2.0, it became more and more evident that the rules were changing, and soon it became noticeable that the information wasn't been valued as much as the "*nodality*" or the capability of connecting audiences. It became evident that messages were useless unless there was an audience that could receive and transmit them and the interest turned towards creating networks rather than controlling the information; since the web 2.0 signals the era of "collaborative web", anyone could create contents. Here is where political parties found it hard to adjust, since now the horizontal communication paradigm enabled the discussion and questioning of information and where contents are no longer created just by an exclusive party elite but rather anyone be it friend or foe.

The transition from the traditional informational web 1.0 communication to the conversational 2.0 paradigm teaches a lesson for parties: they must understand that their role is not to be a dam that controls the flow of information but rather to establish itself as a vast communication node or a "facilitator" of information. It is true that conversational web communication implies exchanging opinions, debating ideas and receiving attacks from rivals, but parties should not fear that since those activities are a necessary component of modern democracies and the trials that harden politicians in the real world.

b. Amateurism

In her 2011 collaboration for the *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's* publication "*Diálogo Político*", Carmen Beatriz Fernández[16] explains brilliantly a common situation that still happens in Latin America: a party leader who would delegate the web communication strategy on his nephew because "he knows about that stuff". It is surprising to see how often cases like this happen among political parties, and frequently relate to initial misconceptions about what web-communication is and what party leaders believe it is, which is often considered something not essential for winning elections. On the contrary, the web is more important than ever for gaining political support and the difference between having an expert or not in charge of the party web-based communication can be the outcome of an election.

Under unskilled hands, web-communication can be either underused (pure advertisement) or even misused (ending up tweeting as the main party activity). Parties must understand the importance of professionalizing the web-based communication, to incorporate it to the

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[16] Fernández, Carmen Beatriz (2011:45)

general communications plan not like an underdog but like an essential complement. Political communication in the real world depends on certain factors that constrain it (such as media interest, physical distance, media coverage, etc.) that the web with its flexibility can overcome.

c.   Defective Communication

Web-users respond to the degree in which a site or the web-based representation of an institution such as political parties presents itself: "freshness" of contents, reliability of the source, possibility to interact and share the information and the degree of control the user has of the information. This last aspect is perhaps the most important since the web 2.0 paradigm has altered the way users use the web, users expect a certain degree of horizontality and for that both parts require to have certain degree of content control. As it will be seen, parties associated with communism or socialism in Latin America tend to have web very rigid vertical communication models with scarce information normally available offline and poorly designed-rarely updated websites often denominated "*electronic brochure-ware*"[17].

Nowadays, parties must make efforts for turning their online presence more "user friendly", allowing the exchange of information, enabling discussions and debates and showing themselves open to opinions, comments and suggestions from users. Parties wanting to turn themselves into informational nodes must ensure the presence of fresh contents and evidence of interactions.

d.   Face valuing Social Networking Sites

For political parties as vote maximizers, numbers and statistics play a pivotal role and those displayed by SNS can impress and deceive more than one. It is common to see party leaders trying to grant face value to the raw data they see on SNS usage and when it doesn't match electoral results or polls the confidence they have in the web shatters. For instance, one of the most common mistakes is to assume that one Facebook subscriber or a Twitter follower equals one vote. Or that the comparison on my online supporters with those of my rivals is an accurate reading of the political momentum or the intention of vote.

There are two main reasons why web statistics and data on SNS are not as straightforward as a telephone poll or a voting trend study; because neither identity nor "humanity" [18] can be assumed for all the web users. For some, communicating via the web is useless because it is impossible to measure the number of votes that a party will gain by using such resources, and there are even some studies suggest that while the internet presents a dynamic change in campaigning technology, it doesn't change the basic calculus behind why people vote (Wagner & Gainous 2009:508).

There are optimists however, that believe that web-communication can be effectively measured. Among them, Gibson (2004:110) believes that success can be measured in different levels and not necessarily in the function of votes. For instance, the first level she refers to is that in which a party would "win" if they get voters to view a site since it relies in the voter's initiative to check it. A second level would be the ability to influence voters to seek further information, and finally, the "great success" would be if the party manages to persuade voters to volunteer or donate; all of them possible to measure through various web applications.

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[17] Jackson & Lilleker 2009:237
[18] Something common particularly in Twitter where politicians can easily hire companies that offer expanding a twitter account through fake followers called "bot armies".

3. OVERVIEW OF THE WEB 2.0 SCENARIO IN LATIN AMERICA

By using the results on the study "Web 2.0 and Political Parties in Latin America"[19], some interesting results showed the situation on political parties *vis-à-vis* web 2.0. The study contemplates three case studies: Mexico, Chile and Colombia for which all the political parties with presence in their respective Federal Congress, totaling 22 parties which were classified based on size, party alignment and whether they were incumbent or challenging. The research tried to assess the following aspects:

- The degree of adoption of web 2.0 tools[20]

- The most and least frequently used web 2.0 tools

- The degree of horizontality of the web-based party communication

a. Degree of Adoption of Web 2.0 Tools

For this stage, the official party websites were investigated trying to locate 20 indicators related to web 2.0, which might include features for enabling interactive communication such as the presence of polls, existence of networks, access to Facebook and Twitter, RSS Feeds enabled, and so on.

Since this stage of the research doesn't analyze the properties of the adopted web 2.0 tools, the results only indicate up to which point the parties have been incorporating platforms and technologies responding to the web 2.0 classifications. After ranking the parties by number of indicators found present[21], the three parties related to the far-left spectre of the sample: *Partido del Trabajo (PT)* from México and *Partido Comunista (PC)* and *Partido Socialista (PS)* from Chile were found at the bottom. Although the sample is not large enough as for establishing a correlation, findings point out that there might be a connection between far-left ideology and the verticality of the communication[22]. Aside from that, the results didn't show any other strong conclusions once they were crossed among the different classifications trying to find trends, as can be observed in the table below

WEB 2.0 TOOLS ADOPTION ASSESSMENT								
	Overall		Mexico		Colombia		Chile	
	Grade (/20)	%	Grade (/20)	%	Grade (/20)	%	Grade (/20)	%
Overall Party	9.1	45.5	8.3	41.4	9.9	49.4	9.0	45.0
	By Size							
Major	9.7	48.3	9.3	46.7	9.7	48.3	10.0	50.0
Minor	8.7	43.5	7.5	37.5	10.0	50.0	8.3	41.3
	By Alignment							
Right Oriented	9.4	47.1	10.0	50.0	9.5	47.5	9.0	45.0
Non-Right Oriented	8.9	44.7	8.0	40.0	10.3	51.3	9.0	45.0
	By Power Stance							
Incumbent	9.3	46.7	10.0	50.0	9.3	46.7	9.0	45.0
Opposition	8.9	44.6	8.0	40.0	11.5	57.5	9.0	45.0

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[19] The Study was carried down by the author between January and April 2012.
[20] For which 20 indicators were chosen, each of them relating to a different web 2.0 tool which either enabled conversational communication among user and host or granted a degree of control of information from the user
[21] See Annex B
[22] Which seems to make sense particularly when considering that the far-left ideology tends to pay special attention in indoctrination of their members

b. Most and Least Frequently Used Tools

The aim of this stage was to assess which were the most and least popular tools being adopted expecting that such measurement would allow the elaboration of further conclusions. In order to do so, the frequency in which each of the selected indicators was present among the 22 studied parties was measured and then displayed in four columns, one for each country case and one overall[23]. As the following step, the top and bottom five tools were analyzed as can be seen in the table below, drawing some conclusions from their characteristics:

MOST/LEAST FREQUENTLY USED WEB 2.0 TOOLS								
MOST FREQUENT								
FEATURES	MEX	%	FEATURES	COL	%	FEATURES	CHL	%
Contact Details	7	100.0	Facebook Account	8	100.0	Contact Details	7	100.0
Facebook Account	7	100.0	Twitter Account	8	100.0	Videos Uploaded	7	100.0
Enmeshing	6	85.7	Search Engine	8	100.0	Twitter Account	6	85.7
Youtube Channel	6	85.7	Contact Details	7	87.5	RSS feeds	5	71.4
Twitter Account	5	71.4	Videos Uploaded	7	87.5	Facebook Account	4	57.1
LEAST FREQUENT								
FEATURES	MEX	%	FEATURES	COL	%	FEATURES	CHL	%
Blogs	0	0.0	Ability of all visitors to update information	2	25.0	Polls	2	28.6
Ability of all visitors to update information	0	0.0	Visitors can upload material	2	25.0	Use of forums	1	14.3
Visitors can upload material	0	0.0	Use of networks	2	25.0	Visitor Initiated Polls	1	14.3
Use of networks	0	0.0	Polls	1	12.5	Visitors can upload material	0	0.0
Visitor Initiated Polls	0	0.0	Visitor Initiated Polls	0	0.0	Use of networks	0	0.0

By analyzing the nature of the tools adopted (Contact Details, Twitter account, Facebook Account, YouTube Channel, etc.) and the tools adopted the least (Polls, use of networks, ability of all visitors to update information, etc.) it can be concluded that the countries studied share a very similar web-based communication approach in which the expansion of networks and the vertical message-delivery prevails, with little attention given on increasing the online interaction with citizens

c. The Degree of Horizontality of the Web-Based Party communication

This stage is also based on the research model proposed by Jackson & Lilleker by "*linking the various elements of Web 2.0 to the central concept of receiver control*", with which it is possible to gain "*a sense of how political communication adheres to the norms of the Web 2.0 community*" (2009b:236-237). It became important at this stage of the research to assess whether the design of the parties' websites encourages interaction and up to which point they are controlling their message.

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[23] See Annex C

The model is composed by the operationalization of two scales: a scale on the direction of the communication which goes from 1 to 3 (one-way, two-way or three-way), and a scale from one to ten on the level of receiver control. The combination of these scales shows a value ranging from 1 to 30 for each party website. The closer a party website is to 30 the more it is adhered to web 2.0 style and rules while the closer to 1 would show a web 1.0 adherence. The values are assigned after making an assessment on the layout of each party website under the scales' criteria. In the following table the results are depicted
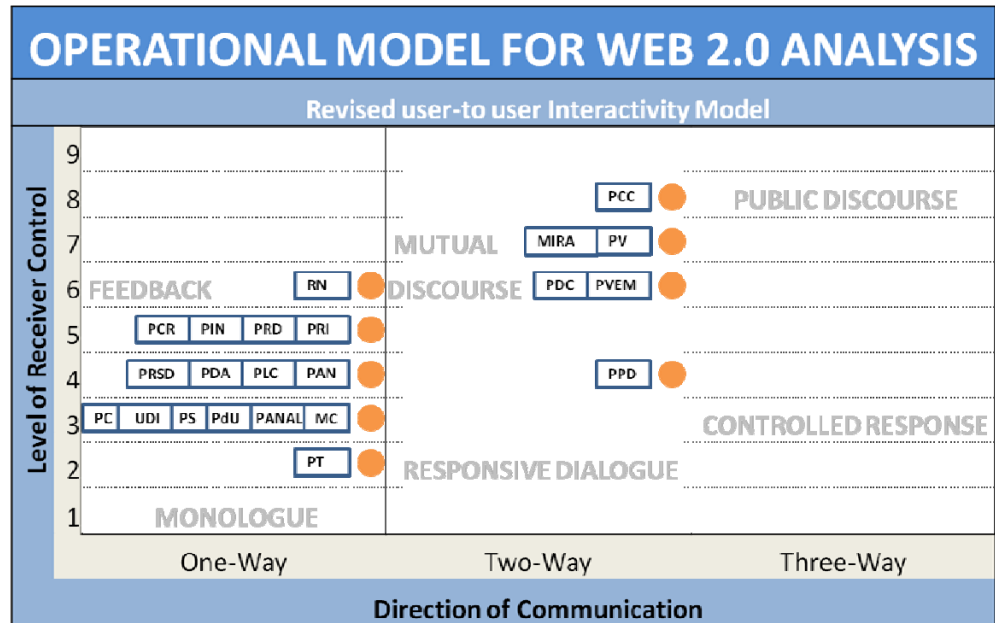
Two main conclusions can be drawn from the previous scale. First of all, by assessing the absence of parties being graded 19+ it can be noted that among the studied cases there are no political parties currently engaged in a discursive communicative level with users and community, which goes along with the previous observations. Secondly, with regards to the gap between party clusters[24], it can be noted that while the proposed model depicts an ascending scale towards more openness in communication, there might be shortcuts by adopting certain Web 2.0 tools which could enable parties to "jump" into more open stages of communication, also suggesting that the distance between the parties with the more open communication schemes and those lagging behind is shorter than what it might appear to be. This last conclusion should become an incentive for lagging parties to catch up while encouraging the leading parties to continue working in order to keep their advantage. Again, the far-left parties ended up at the bottom of the table.

4. CONCLUSIONS: THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Although internet access rate and penetration levels of SNS is on the rise throughout Latin America, findings show that political parties in the region have been rather low in adopting web 2.0 tools and when doing it, the focus is to expand the reach of their networks leaving behind the possibility of engaging in a more participative web interaction. Putting aside all the possible misconceptions that might be blocking the process of enhancing web-based party communication, it is important for party leaders to be informed and constantly up-

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[24] The clusters are the one from 2 to 6 which contains 16 parties and the one from 14-18 which contains six parties.

dated on the rising technologies since newer and more powerful applications can be trans-
lated into better and more effective political strategies.

The democratic system is in a transition stage, one in which citizens have become aware of
their rights, demand them to be recognized and mobilize in their defense if needed; some-
thing to which the web has contributed significantly[25]. In this context, it is frequent to per-
ceive the disinterest of voters for political parties with which they share little identification
and a generalized mistrust about how effectively would they will be representing their inter-
ests. This phenomenon is present throughout the whole region and even beyond, like in the
case of Europe where the emergence of the Pirate Parties has been credited to this distrust
on preexisting political alternatives.

Parties must reinvent themselves and rethink their role among a society that is undergoing
a fast digitalization process and which requires the establishment of channels of effective
interaction, and through the web 2.0 it is possible to reach the enormous potential of the
web with a relatively low cost compared to the way it makes it possible for parties to reach
a large and diverse voter segments, some of them inaccessible through other channels, like
in the case of young voters. Moreover, new and more powerful applications can make an
enormous difference in the success of a party as a manager, a facilitator and a communica-
tor.

Showing a glimpse of what is yet to come with web 3.0, new applications have been emerg-
ing with semantic attributes that will allow parties to transform themselves. Tools such as
real time dashboards that monitor web presence from rivals through tagging, web and so-
cial media intelligence, real time geo-referencing softwares that help monitoring elections
are just few examples of the multitude of applications already available and emerging every
day. The web has transformed our lives and in the following years will revolutionize the role
of political parties and those with a vision, a strategy and the willingness to explore new
technologies will reap the greater benefits.

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[25] Cases like those of the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street and the #YoSoy132 movements which will be
further described in this issue of Cadernos Adenauer

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APPENDIX

ANNEX A

INTERNET ACCESS (2000-2010)						
	NUMBER OF INTERNET USERS			NUMBER OF INTERNET USERS (PER 100 PEOPLE)		
Country Name	2000	2005	2010	2000	2005	2010
World	395,088,191.22	1,022,289,697.59	2,014,028,387.89	6.78	15.87	30.48
OECD members	320,179,465.17	646,440,862.85	862,838,674.26	27.77	54.11	69.80
Latin America & Caribbean	**20,268,996.30**	**92,329,805.17**	**199,881,310.59**	**3.90**	**16.64**	**33.98**
Brazil	5,007,203.70	39,099,569.36	79,245,740.06	2.87	21.02	40.65
Mexico	5,079,330.97	18,325,854.58	35,161,144.57	5.08	17.21	31.00
Colombia	877,807.08	4,737,587.80	16,897,616.97	2.21	11.01	36.50
Argentina	2,599,435.57	6,854,529.69	14,548,455.36	7.04	17.72	36.00
Venezuela, RB	818,005.00	3,347,146.68	10,325,523.05	3.36	12.59	35.81
Chile	2,559,690.12	5,082,119.65	7,701,159.60	16.60	31.18	45.00
Bolivia	119,853.95	478,149.07	1,985,969.80	1.44	5.23	20.00
Source: World Bank (http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.P2 and http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER)						

ANNEX B

NUMBER OF WEB 2.0 TOOLS ADOPTED PER PARTY					
PARTY	PARTY SIZE	POWER STANCE	PARTY ALIGNMENT	COUNTRY	GRADE
Movimiento Independiente de Renovación Absoluta (MIRA)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Colombia	16
Partido Conservador Colombiano (PCC)	Major	Incumbent	Right	Colombia	15
Partido por la Democracia (PPD)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Chile	15
Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC)	Major	Opposition	Non-Right	Chile	12
Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)	Major	Opposition	Non-Right	Mexico	11
Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Mexico	11
Partido de Integración Nacional (PIN)	Minor	Incumbent	Right	Colombia	11
Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)	Major	Incumbent	Right	Mexico	10
Partido Verde (PV)	Minor	Incumbent	Non-Right	Colombia	10
Partido Radical Social Demócrata (PRSD)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Chile	10
Unión Democrática Independiente (UDI)	Major	Incumbent	Right	Chile	10
Partido Liberal Colombiano (PLC)	Major	Incumbent	Non-Right	Colombia	8
Renovación Nacional (RN)	Major	Incumbent	Right	Chile	8
Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)	Major	Opposition	Non-Right	Mexico	7
Movimiento Ciudadano (MC)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Mexico	7
Partido Nueva Alianza (PANAL)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Mexico	7
Polo Democrático Alternativo (PDA)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Colombia	7
Partido Social de Unidad Nacional (PdeU)	Major	Incumbent	Right	Colombia	6
Partido Cambio Radical (PCR)	Minor	Incumbent	Right	Colombia	6
Partido Comunista (PC)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Chile	6
Partido del Trabajo (PT)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Mexico	5
Partido Socialista (PS)	Minor	Opposition	Non-Right	Chile	2

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MOST/LEAST FREQUENTLY ADOPTED WEB 2.0 TOOLS								
			FREQUENCY					
FEATURES	OVERALL	%	MEXICO	%	COLOMB	%	CHILE	%
Contact Details	21	95.5	7	100.0	7	87.5	7	100.0
Twitter Account	19	86.4	5	71.4	8	100.0	6	85.7
Facebook Account	19	86.4	7	100.0	8	100.0	4	57.1
Videos Uploaded	18	81.8	4	57.1	7	87.5	7	100.0
Search Engine	16	72.7	4	57.1	8	100.0	4	57.1
Private conversations	13	59.1	3	42.9	6	75.0	4	57.1
Enmeshing	13	59.1	6	85.7	4	50.0	3	42.9
Youtube Channel	12	54.5	6	85.7	4	50.0	2	28.6
RSS feeds	11	50.0	3	42.9	3	37.5	5	71.4
Ability of all visitors to share information	10	45.5	4	57.1	3	37.5	3	42.9
Petitions	8	36.4	3	42.9	3	37.5	2	28.6
Public conversations	7	31.8	1	14.3	3	37.5	3	42.9
Blogs	6	27.3	0	0.0	2	25.0	4	57.1
Flickr	6	27.3	1	14.3	3	37.5	2	28.6
Polls	6	27.3	3	42.9	1	12.5	2	28.6
Ability of all visitors to update information	5	22.7	0	0.0	2	25.0	3	42.9
Use of forums	5	22.7	1	14.3	3	37.5	1	14.3
Visitors can upload material	2	9.1	0	0.0	2	25.0	0	0.0
Use of networks	2	9.1	0	0.0	2	25.0	0	0.0
Visitor Initiated Polls	1	4.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3

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