La participación digital en la construcción de la e-democracia y ciudadanía digital

The Digital Participation in the construction of the e-democracy and digital citizenship

Participação Digital na construção de e-democracia e cidadania digital

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Resumen

Este trabajo documenta y explora un ejercicio de participación ciudadana y ciudadanía digital en México a través del análisis de una herramienta interactiva denominada *PlenoCiudadano*, lanzada en septiembre de 2015. Esta aplicación busca administrar la relación y el diálogo que deben mantener los diputados y senadores con sus representados para facilitar la toma de decisiones y la priorización de su trabajo legislativo, comunicando sus avances de manera ágil a través de los dispositivos móviles de la sociedad civil. Para el análisis se recurrió a grupos focales y la descripción de la app *PlenoCiudadano*. Los resultados respecto a la percepción de los panelistas señalaron dos aspectos fundamentales: la brecha digital impide el ejercicio pleno de la

ciudadanía digital y la participación ciudadana, y el uso de la tecnología no es suficiente para la construcción de una ciudadanía digital mientras continúe la falta de credibilidad en las acciones del gobierno.

Palabras clave: comunicación digital, ciudadanía digital, participación ciudadana.

Abstract

This work documents and explores an exercise of Citizen Participation and digital citizenship in Mexico through the analysis of an interactive tool called *PlenoCiudadano,* launched in September of 2015. This application seeks to manage the relationship and dialogue that should keep the deputies and senators with their constituents to facilitate decisions making and the prioritization of its legislative work, communicating their progress in an agile way through the mobile devices of the civil society. For the analysis were appealed to focal groups and the description of the app *PlenoCiudadano*. The results regarding the perception of the panelists pointed out two fundamental aspects: the digital divide prevented the full exercise of digital citizenship and civic participation, and the use of the technology is not enough for the construction of a digital citizenship while the lack of credibility continues in the actions of the Government.

Key words: digital communication, digital citizenship, citizen participation.

Resumo

Este documento descreve e explora um exercício de participação do cidadão e cidadania digital no México através da análise de uma ferramenta interativa chamada PlenoCiudadano, lançado em Setembro de 2015. Esta aplicação procura gerenciar o relacionamento e diálogo que deve manter os deputados e senadores com o seu representou para facilitar a tomada de decisão e definição de prioridades dos seus trabalhos legislativos, comunicando seu progresso rapidamente através de dispositivos móveis da sociedade civil. Para a análise foi utilizado para focar grupos e a descrição do app PlenoCiudadano. Os resultados referentes à percepção dos painelistas apontou para dois aspectos fundamentais: o fosso digital impede o pleno exercício da cidadania digital e

participação cívica, e uso de tecnologia não é suficiente para construir uma cidadania digital enquanto o fracasso contínuo de credibilidade nas ações do governo.

Introduction

The advanced XXI century requires an accelerated growth in the adoption and adaptation of tools that promote new forms of communication between the Government and citizens. This forces to make Information and Communications Technologies development options available to all sectors of society. It is interesting identify the perception on these initiatives, the confidence that is deposited in them and the continuity or life useful that can have in the daily agenda of the legislative session.

The purpose of this work was to analyze citizens perception initiatives that the Government launches to promote communication with citizens. Similarly, we sought to determine the extent of digital tools which may perhaps increase citizen participation, and thus contribute to the strengthening of interaction between participation, citizenship and digital tools.

For it is understood that the citizen participation depends on the decition making of a series of actions and initiatives that boost the social welfare, promote the citizenship and call to democracy; as Tellez points out (2009, p. 19), "participation, to have a value from different legal levels, regulatory and cultural, sets relations that enable the action of the social sectors in search of satisfactory answers to their demands". Active social participation within the scope of the public administration and the social construction process takes specific paths Depending on the interest that shows the society in responding to the needs and rights of the citizenship.

The new Information and Communications Technologies (TIC), specifically the internett, they have gradually "computerized" the bureaucratic processes, in other words, have made that the treatment to the citizen to become more personalized thanks to technology (Flores, 2015). In that sense, the application of different technology tools entails new ways to see and interpret reality.

People who use recurrently technological support Internet within the context of new hypermedia modalities are part of the so-called information society (Van Dijck, 2013); as users of digital media become visible and redirect their ideas to the understanding of new processes active and organized participation, becoming active members of contemporary hypermediacy (Lopez, 2005; Scolari, 2008).

In the case of this article, the fact that the government promote through technology their own development plans and ways of operating their delivery systems, has to do with the willingness to interact with "machines", that is, with new media specifically designed to build and everyday social world in a big emphasis on configuration information flows.

In that sense, digital citizenship refers to the set of practices, which according to Jenkins (2011), widen democracy through the use of digital networks and are basic competence to function in this contemporary democracies.

Therefore, from the context of cyberculture, this means not only speak of a new commitment of the organization of culture in general, but the relationship of computer science with social life and shaping a perspective that includes the New technologies (Lévy, 2007), the old, and all the social space within a new worldview to organize all possible links between the different social components, where citizenship becomes a digital citizenship, which has to do with the development new needs and other cultural ways of conceiving and organizing access to services.

In a more elaborate form, a digital citizenship is full of demands, the same as in turn large systems generate information and communication between individuals and society; therefore, the development and proper functioning of digital systems depends on who participate responsibly to interact, communicate, share and dialogue, as well as to consolidate and give voice to individual or group identities; as to generate foundation movements, actions, proposals etc. (Sanchez, 2007).

So the digital citizenship means understanding the cultural and social relations, which in turn have to do with the use of technology at your fingertips supports, as well as the application of new modes and behaviors on the understanding of phenomena and principles that guide towards the use of information ethics, legality, safety, responsibility and others. Therefore, a digital citizen who becomes constant and recurring use of the provisions internet is entitled to use the new technologies of information and communication as they develop digital skills, travel and access to online information secure, transparent and private, and to participate in various technological means which today are mostly public and getting cheaper.

Because of this, this digital citizenship arises from the new forms of socializing through new digital contacts and the link they generate. Moreover, it can be noted that the proper use of them stems in part from the empirical, of not formally know what arises from the recognition of new realities that drive new concepts and perceptions; concepts that generate exchange of ideas, knowledge and confirmation of identity consolidation, all within the framework of new technologies.

If you take into account that digital culture has rapidly advanced increasingly solid cyberculture, especially by the presence of the Internet and the use of digital networks and public web spaces, it is easy opening is assumed to an atmosphere new uses that generate new cultures, which designed and modified processes and infrastructure to converge symbolically in technological modifications that have been installed on the daily happenings (Lévy, 2007; Flores, 2015).

Digital media remain and will for a long time to produce parallel opening new horizons for productive ways and to be installed in the "just in time" to keep society connected remotely and to be part of the new joint expressions that streamline both the organization of institutions and relations with the public that as already mentioned aims to strengthen and find a differential space but with special appearance -dedicated attention to user- and thus assume that forms part of the spheres of the public (Criado and Rojas, 2013).

Increasingly institutions and public bodies seek with technology implementations interrelate with the social world and citizens to change the perception of reality, indeed, sought a change in time and space saving and perhaps of some so simplifying ways to interact so unimaginable with themselves. The technologies are changing the perception of time significantly, you can even live in isolation and be always connected to solve through digital media countless situations. His fluency, ubiquity, speed and lack of intermediation make them detonator discourse between citizens.

Communication is increasingly sensory, more dynamic and multidimensional, attract technologies are simpler, cheaper, portable and paradoxically increase the demands of a more complex and ephemeral ciudanía. Although you can also see that in terms of citizenship, authors such as Benjamin Barber (2001, Petrizzo, 2005) provides ways in which ICTs influence the relationship between citizens and politics, while the tool designed to give solution to a real problem, does not change reality. They function as a mirror of the moment. Moreover, Lopez (2005) indicates that e-government is a possible answer to the demand of companies have closer

to citizens State; however, he considers it a product and can help solve a problem, you can also aggravate the problem for which it was thought he could solve.

That is why, as Petrizzo (2005, p. 98) states that "the term citizenship is part of the discourse on social justice and the relationship of the individual to a political community. The citizen is limited to elect representatives in the field representative democracy or approve decisions made by politicians and technocrats."

Full description of the app Citizen

**Figure 1**. Cover Full Citizen

PlenoCiudadano is a technology platform that was launched on Monday, September 7, 2015. It is an application designed for users of Android and Apple devices which can be downloaded for free from Google Play and App Store, respectively (Figure 1).

According to Propel (2015), the creator of the application, this allows each legislator and their teams can manage their relationship and dialogue with their constituents. Senators and deputies will meet the concerns of citizens, address their concerns and communicate their agenda and other details of their participation in the legislative work.

In this way it was planned as an interactive tool that allows them to know the citizen feeling, facilitates decision making and prioritization of their legislative work and communicating their progress swiftly through mobile devices civil society.

Figure 2. Legislative work trends
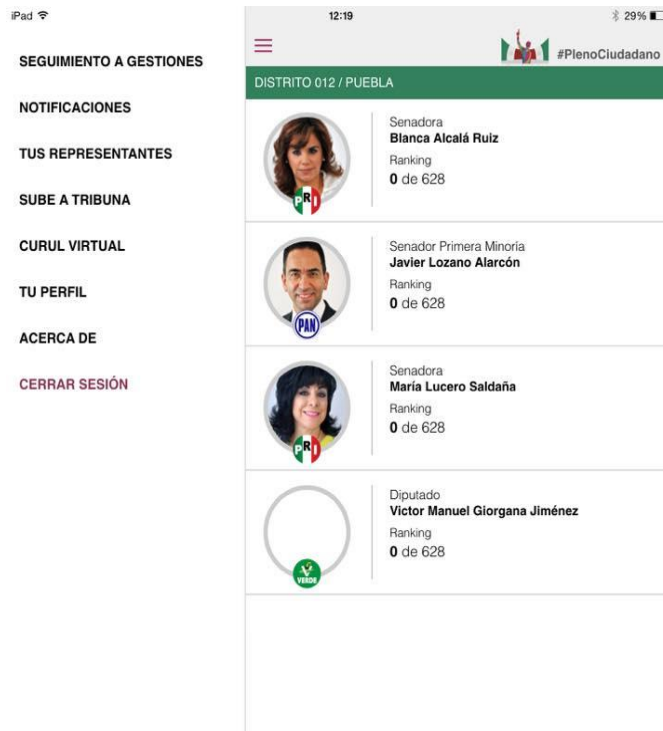
By contrast, users of the application aims to provide trends legislative work, measure the degree of commitment of its representatives to the sessions and project monitoring, and finally promote democratic life of Mexico, as the above aspects are considered necessary and indispensable to decide at the polls (figures 2 and 3) elements.

The application, once downloaded, on your home screen handles the logo itself, a caption that says "It requires your congressmen" and two options "Register" and "Login".

Logging option leads to a screen where you must write the following data: email, full name, password, confirm password, confirm password, address, neighborhood, ZIP code and city or delegation. Before registration must check a box in which consent is given for personal data aggregates are treated as stated in the notice of privacy of the page. The home is a very important option, since it is the way in which the application determines the representatives in the Senate of

users. In the option to enter only the username and password you type. It should be noted that no email confirmation is required, which means that anyone can create a false identity.

Within the application, in the upper left, are all options offered by the system: monitoring efforts (where monitoring is given to them), notifications, your representatives, up to grandstand, virtual seat, your profile, on and log off.

Figure 3. Project following
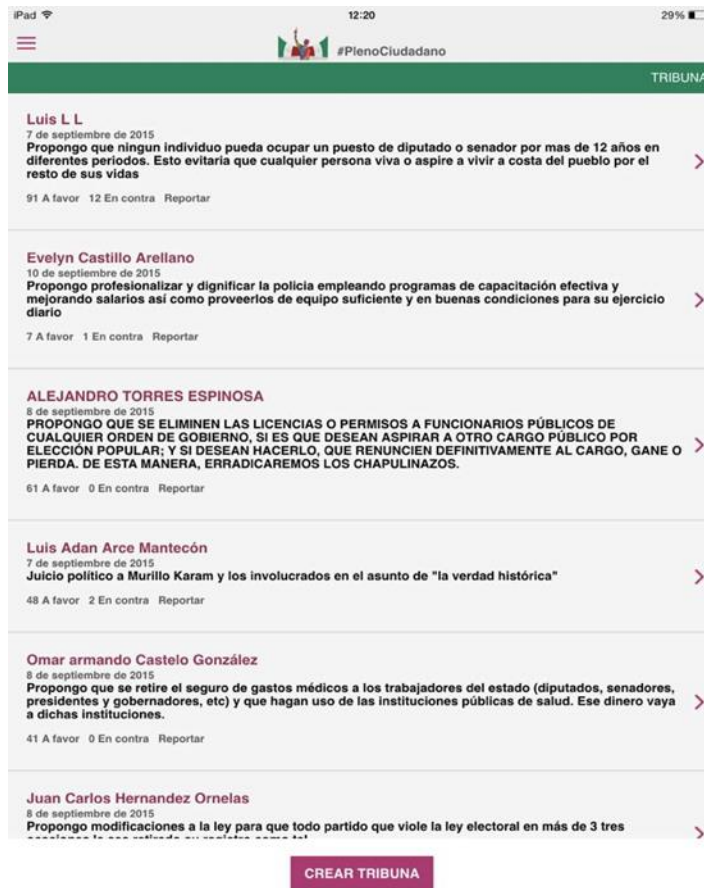
Representatives option shows the deputies and senators corresponding to the district assigned by the home address that was provided in the registration. Here you can identify representatives with their photos and the parties they belong, also can qualify them by a ranking,

In virtual seat section, users can vote for, against, comment or report proposals created by citizens or representatives. An example of proposal with 91 votes in favor and 12 against is: "I propose that no individual can occupy a position of deputy or senator for more than 12 years in

different periods. This would prevent any living person aspires to live at the expense of the people for the rest of his life "(Figure 3).

The virtual curul makes a list of the new proposals and voted by the user and the application. The profile option allows changes and supplement the information provided in the registration.

Section about explains the way in session chambers of deputies and senators and how they choose to, also collects information from developers.

Finally, the log can access the application with a new account.

It is planned that every month a report where 628 congressmen will be ranked according to the following is issued: interaction with citizens via direct messages, resolution efforts on behalf of their constituents, attending meetings, transparency according to parameters Transparencia Mexicana and IMCO, vote attached to the preferences expressed by each district within the platform.

The creative company, Propel, is a Mexican company founded in 2008 with a presence in Mexico City and Guadalajara. Its main objective is to promote the use of new technologies to transform Mexico through initiatives with social commitment and actions to eliminate the social, cultural, economic and digital divides. Other initiatives promoted by Propel are: digital agendas for states, projects of national and municipal digital connectivity index (Propel, 2015).

Method

Since this work is merely exploratory remains complex and difficult to address the population that is interested in the subject (age and gender) issue, as well as access to smart phones, the launch time of the app, and knowledge of the population of the app, we decided to use as a research technique focus groups, qualitative methodology, which allowed to make an approach to the perceptions and views that experts in the field of communication have on the subject, as well as the perception and appreciation, which on PlenoCiudadano could have app users.

The question guide was divided into three areas: citizen participation, digital media and digital citizenship. two focus groups, one with communication experts, citizen participation and digital communication, and other youth or potential users of the site were conducted. In the case of the youth group, in addition to the above, the aspect related to the perception of the design and interest that the app was added. Each focus group consisted of 7 people. Then the guide questions in Table 1.

Table I. Guide questions focus group

Participación ciudadana	Comunicación digital	Ciudadanía digital	Percepción de la APP
¿Qué es la participación ciudadana? ¿Cómo ellos ejercen su participación ciudadana? ¿Qué papel juega la comunicación en la participación ciudadana? ¿Cuáles son los perfiles de un ciudadano interesado en participar en la solución de problemáticas de la agenda nacional?	¿Qué es la comunicación digital? ¿Cuál es el fin de la comunicación digital? ¿Cuáles son los elementos base de la comunicación digital?	¿Qué es la ciudadanía digital? ¿Conocen cuáles son las herramientas, aplicaciones o medios para ejercer la ciudadanía digital? ¿Cómo se debe comunicar el ciudadano con el gobierno? ¿Cuál es la participación de los ciudadanos en el quehacer de los políticos? ¿Cuál es el perfil de un ciudadano digital?	¿A qué les remite la imagen de portada de Pleno ciudadano? ¿Qué esperan de una aplicación de este tipo? ¿Utilizarían esta aplicación? ¿Qué opinan de la APP *PlenoCiudadano*?
¿QUÉ Y CÓMO DEBE SER LA COMUNICACIÓN PARA FOMENTAR LA CIUDADANÍA DIGITAL?			

Source: elaboración propia

After conducting focus groups, these were transcribed in full. Then, following the methodology outlined by Rodriguez, Gil and Garcia (2010, p. 199), which states that "the data supports information about reality, it involves a conceptual elaboration of that information and a way of expressing that enables conserva

tion and communication, "he proceeded to organize information in a reduction and data available in seven trends described below results.

Results

What could be observed with the focus groups are basically the following trends:

1) That there is not yet a conscious and organized citizen participation.

> Political expression that begins in the individual who is oriented to the collective.
>
> Does not exist or be practicing consider participation in a formal way, in order to have better results. As such, many the only exercise the vote, marches, social movements.
>
> Is limited, is basic, how to respect rules, I simply set out.
>
> I do not I practice as it should be, should go to vote.
>
> I do not have a hundred, vote, do not throw trash and now.
>
> I specifically from the frame I exercise I know, the political issues basically getting involved in electoral processes.
>
> I think my participation is through electoral matters to attend to vote, representing box and from personal Face,
>
> Voting and going to the polls and now.

Citizen participation remains a milestone related to the vote in the elections. It is in the collective imagination since a mandatory perspective but also as a right. However, it is not exercised neither the right nor the obligation is fulfilled. It is also assumed as a transition from the individual to the collective, although in the case of the participants recognized few of them reach the collective level.

It is concentrated in everyday, simple and specific activities. While it is intended to raise awareness of the actions that must be generated for the benefit of others, it does not have a leadership to organize and promote the organization of a structured public participation.

2) The digital communication is far from a reality that can be reflected in the country (lack of access, education, and is only a simulation).

> We are not trained to know how to use properly, the human being has feedback mediated by digital there is no feedback, no communication.
>
> Double-edged sword, we are informed, but away; should come labeled "caution".
>
> Breaks with the definitions of being a citizen, and not talk about what a digital citizenship. If we talk about lack of awareness, there is no digital citizenship, only a company digitized and electronically mediated, but not citizenship digitized or digital; then there
>
> It is a revolution but has had more consequences than benefits.

While the government has launched reforms to benefit the widespread use of digital technologies giving away laptops and promoting the free connection in different places, have not been generated messages that allow us to speak of a communication, but simply of sending information a unidirectional sense.

In addition to this, the generation gap is much more marked in the field of usability and accessibility of digital media, since the percentage of citizens in Mexico with the training for the use and exploitation of these technological tools, is minimum.

3) The digital citizenship tends to alienate citizens from the real problems.

> What happens is that results in: from my home with my chips and already participate, and that is harmful, because then separated. It also comes in a dimension of anonymity where I feel good because I sent my request to Change.
>
> We have failed to manage it, we see news that instead of only limited help to inform.
>
> Feedback is not to comment on Face, that's an opinion, the faces do not indicate either tangible. The human can not claim that through the screen will be able to transmit the body sense.

... And do not stand up and the situation, or even an engagement, so to speak, one hundred percent, is from the comfort of my home, I stay here, the screen protects me and no longer run any risk involved and not even have to spend on my per diem, who's going to feed; from here I can be eating my chips and do not go out.

But we are not ready as a society, corrupting the human form of insensitive socialize, we see problems and I click and I share, and ready.

It may seem out of context factor which granted full credibility to a medium today; however, due to the lack of guidance on how they should be decoded messages obtained from digital media, and how they should be shared, has fostered a lack of complementary information through traditional means, giving a value what there really mentioned.

The speed with which these contents are disseminated apparently affects the possible reflection and therefore the feedback sent through ICT.

4) There is a conceptual construction of digital citizenship.

Everyone who has done something online and has been successful are another tribe, who are dominating the logic of the computer have incredible lack of human sensitivity.

There is no digital citizenship, only a company digitized and electronically mediated, but not citizenship digitized or digital, it does not exist.

I think it may be someone involved from the comfort of home and from that generates proposals and has a longer range with many contacts you have on social networks and emails, and from it to work in larger networks, but all from the comfort of home.

If we refer to digital citizenship, I think it refers to a slightly broader concept that transcends individual development alone, but a whole. I think we can talk in that sense that digital citizenship is one that generates some kind of political, social and cultural order in a virtual reality environment and the question whether it would be delicate to address here as to establish that debate, because not necessarily that virtual reality is a reflection of reality here, no, the real analogue of people that are not mediated by technology.

> I would not dare say that there is digital citizenship, they are effervescence and finished. Youth social movements do not imply digital citizenship, are not well supported, I find meaning to interact with a machine.

Diversity in perceptions of the concepts of citizenship and scope of digital, allow us to see that there is confusion over the term of digital citizenship. The lack of an immediate reference to appeal to a known definition seems to be the explanation of participation or lack thereof in the actions that a society requires.

You can not ask for work on a sense of who you are misinformed, so perceived resistance and disbelief.

5) Apathy is an obstacle to public participation regardless of technology. There are two types of exclusion, the digital divide, and lack of education to give an end to the technology beyond entertainment (no profiles digital citizens).

> Technologies offer benefits and negatives, but not everyone has access to computers and the internet if done what good is, and if they are given and are not trained, what?
>
> Actually, you're a digital illiterate, and even more serious because you think you're not as you think you're not not learn, because you think you need not.
>
> Already beginning to include and begin to create gaps otherwise, that is because there is a gap that is access, which is "I can not afford a computer, can not afford the internet", but a new gap is even more dangerous the gap of knowledge about the technology.
>
> Yes, it depends on what we do with the media, digital citizenship does exist, but we are in diapers, we're not even talking about it.
>
> It was expected that 132 was a turning point of digital media, social causes against taxation, candidates, lack of communication in digital media, are well structured but as something tangible not achieve the objective, digital citizenship has not finished exploit.
>
> I think in order to act and move people not an academic preparation is needed, is the level of commitment of the person influences the area in which it moves, they are constrained by the issue of being able to access or take out, has to do with level of commitment and seriousness.

The use and consumption of digital media is governed by a matter of membership of social groups, and acceptance of different communities to be part of, but not to be who changes or move to encourage participation. Missing a comprehensive training on how digital content should be handled.

6) Distrust of the government generates rejection of government initiatives.

> Worked in Egypt and in Mexico, not the animal works and politicians, who watches the watchers ?, the Mexican not motivated by government oversight.
>
> We have many social problems, how we articulate, because what they said in general there is discontent among citizens, maybe even in terms of public policy are asked for their opinion. The government does not act, I have always said, we have no government actions. So how do we get citizens to participate? People want to participate.
>
> The TV was imposed, as the internet has been imposed, the government must authorize the train all that requires this.
>
> I think the government does not know how to use nor understand them (new technologies). I would say not want them. There have been a thought in terms of transparency platforms. That is, as they are justified in saying: "We have the platform", but the fact of having the platform and the technology does not make the actions are articulated.
>
> We are in Mexico, halfway through the presidency of Enrique Peña Nieto, no fear, speak better climate and do not get into politics. What I participate ?, and say, how do your job ?, need a reminder, they need a post it?

The company has a surfeit towards everything that comes from the government. This creates distrust initiatives presented, and therefore decreases the possible participation. The background derived from different social movements across digital platforms allowed to see that inclusion in different activities are only given when the fundamental characteristics of common interest, such as proximity and promptness interest apply, regardless of any gap as nodal point, everything revolves around a natural interest and a rejection also born to everything that comes with government tint.

7) Regarding the PlenoCiudadano app could be seen clearly that there is resistance to its use, although it is considered a good initiative. Above all, there is little credibility in the initiatives of its district representatives.

> Whoever lower it should be of interest, monitor, interest in their environment, in its colony, is a viable tool. The scope, no, because even half of the population has access to internet.
>
> Not everyone has access no idea what a Smartphone.
>
> It should be noted dissemination, scope, reliability is a good idea but should take the points well.
>
> I do not want to give suggestions to the Senate because I'm not your profile, I'm not interested.
>
> I find it interesting but not much relevance.
>
> The root problem is that not everyone knows the duties of a senator or deputy, it is in rural areas, they think that with this meet, but the functions of them go beyond. To solve this problem come though is not the way.
>
> I do not care, do not come, do not come down. I get bored. Have on hand a way to find out my needs, I see no case.
>
> The image does not encourage me to come in, looks like something from citizen to citizen, to favor them to them, as they already did something so they can complain.
>
> Go to the Chamber of Deputies is difficult, I do like this app and draw attention, invite interaction.

The app does not arouse interest in young people when they have reliable platforms, which have been organized without the intervention of any governmental sector. The opinion and actions to make government officials are not subject to attract them, let alone are willing to engage them see their mistakes or tasks.

Discussion

The effects of the use of new information and communications technology regularly are reflected in the ways of doing and saying of individuals on a personal level, however, for the effects it has on the collective participation it was observed that forms and consequences multiply in terms of diversity that technology offers, so reflects concrete effects on common models to generate participation and action in apparent benefit of the social.

Now, in the sense of advanced technology, a digital platform do you really openly promotes what is now defined as e-democracy? Or is it simply a tool to bring the voice of the citizens who contribute ideas? The questions can be multiplied as in the process of digital participatory democracy and interconnectivity in the world, the bias openness to these devices and actions of society opens, as the digital divide even for Mexico is very large and leaves gaps for applications, increasing technological backwardness and participation models. At the same time, implementation of technology to serve the public to monitor government activity implies a reflection on the citizens themselves should be informed about their context but empowered in the use of these tools. This requires active individuals in decisions that benefit society.

This study allowed us to visualize different areas of opportunity to investigate: on the one hand it was noted that the launch of an application does not guarantee their use, at least for those who at some point will be practicing some work on the subject, theoretical or practical, as participants all communication area, require inputs to find out what happens in the political and social context of their community; then then it required to expand the population group to verify if within the areas of social sciences or humanities this aspect is changed.

Definitely one of the weaknesses of this work is that it was an exploratory study using a qualitative technique that requires supplemented with more focus groups to further build a quantitative tool to provide us with other data; however, it is not able to verify the need to work in the field of confidence towards the government while the interest towards these issues by future professionals of communication.

Another area of opportunity of this study is in order to verify whether geographically this result is repeated, since the study was done in Puebla, entity where citizen participation has not yet acquired its potential, for it was decided to replicate the study, with the same population group, but now in another state of the republic in order to see if the result is presented differently.

Likewise, it is considered that since the study was done shortly after the launch of the app, research the matter should become longitudinal to continue monitoring this issue and see if acquires a dimension different amount, and even of the participants tracked what they presented and which at the time was unknown to them.

Conclusion

It is concluded that although there are digital media applications that generate citizen participation, much remains to be done in developing spaces that offer users the opportunity to participate and contribute responsibly to the benefit of the community.

In the same way, and even though the concept of "citizen participation" was first used in Mexico during the administration of Salinas de Gortari, it was observed that there has been adopted by some sectors of Mexican society. This implies that people do not spontaneously generate empowerment and self-governance through their social participation; ie, society is sometimes shown "passive", "young", "disinterested" or "faithless" to government decisions, before the creation of public policies and to all processes and actions that should be involved because incumbent.

Therefore, one should speak of a dual responsibility of citizens; first conceived as such (understanding their responsibilities and rights) in the plane of the individual; and secondly, to act as a citizen in the plane of the collective. However a question comes out: is promoting citizen responsibility and learn the concepts of citizen participation and citizenship, or is the government responsible for teaching and spreading these notions? Although you can play with the rhetoric of the response, this paper indicates the possibilities offered by digital communication to promote digital citizenship and citizen participation using tools created by society, to be the same citizens begin to forge their own alternatives within the opportunities provided by the authorities.

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