



**ASAMBLEA
GENERAL OEA**
Juntos contra la desigualdad y la discriminación
PERÚ - 2022



Representación Permanente del Perú
ante la Organización de los Estados Americanos



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REPORT

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS VIRTUAL EVENT FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN PREPARATION FOR THE 52nd OAS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ORGANIZER: Department for Effective Public Management of the Secretariat for Hemispheric Affairs, at the initiative of the Permanent Mission of Peru to the OAS

DATE: July 11, 2022

TIME: 11:00 a.m. (Washington, D.C. time – EST)

PRESENTATIONS

1. Welcoming remarks by **Ambassador Harold Forsyth**, Permanent Representative of Peru to the OAS. [Remarks](#)

On the way to the next OAS General Assembly scheduled for October 5-7, 2022, in Peru, the Permanent Mission of Peru to the OAS, together with the OAS, have taken the initiative to host events on thematic areas on interest for the general assembly. Among them, digital democracy stands out given that the advances in information and communication technologies have transformed the way we live and the way we relate to each other in all areas, including the political sphere.

2. Opening remarks by the Director of the Department for Effective Public Management of the OAS, **María Fernanda Trigo**. [Remarks](#)

The OAS, through the Department for Effective Public Management (DEPM), supports member states in promoting the use of information and communication technologies to strengthen transparency,

improve efficiency in the provision of public services, promote the accountability of public institutions and have mechanisms for citizen participation; all essential aspects to strengthen democracy. The inputs from this dialogue are expected to contribute to the work agenda and discussions on inequality and discrimination that the government of Peru has proposed for the upcoming 52nd OAS General Assembly, as well as to reinforce work of the DEPM on the implementation of the agreements of the Digital Transformation Commitment of the IX Summit of the Americas.

3. Discussants:

- **Daniel Innerarity, Director of the Institute for Democratic Governance, Spain:** [Presentation](#)
Democracy is born as a promise of equality, which is considered attainable through institutions such as voting, representation and participation.
Algorithmic logic examines groups of populations and creates profiles, which offers wide possibilities for exclusion and manipulation. These algorithms have a political dimension to the extent that they intervene in the social order, towards influencing and structuring our decisions; however, without a policy, artificial intelligence is not capable of achieving or guaranteeing that equality to which democracy aspires. This is evident in the fact that technology does not dissipate the controversies derived from our different conceptions of equality nor does it guarantee the simultaneous satisfaction of preferences of diverse interests. If there was agreement on what equality means, then the algorithm would do a purely technical task. Finally, no technological device can spare us the work of democratic discussion around the objectives, although it can facilitate the task of implementing the objectives that we have democratically decided to pursue.
- **Elaine Ford, Founder Director of Digital Democracy, Peru:** [Presentation](#)
Digital democracy means putting the internet and technology at the service of citizens and society to strengthen the rights and freedoms of individuals and to favor modernization and innovation processes in public entities.
In the context of the digital age, we find risks that directly reduce citizen coexistence and can destabilize our democracies, among them the 6D stand out: Disinformation, Hate Discourse, Citizen Disaffection, Citizen Distrust, Discrimination and Inequality. These Ds distort our democracies and are exacerbated and take on other dimensions upon greater digitalization.
- **Anabel Cruz, Founder Director of the Institute of Communication and Development, Uruguay:** [Presentation](#)
Digital democracy goes far beyond the provision of digital services, this involves a series of tools that allow interaction between actors of different nature and that enables the strengthening the pillars of democracy. Digital democracy offers the possibility of consulting citizens, knowing their demands, their opinions and obtaining suggestions regarding governance.
To build a healthy digital democracy, it is important that governments open datasets to the public so it is necessary to enhance the usability of data, while promoting fluid feedback between rulers and citizens to generate spaces that protect and promote the digital rights, understanding them as an extension of the rights addressed in the universal declaration of the United Nations. Finally, the digital divide prevents vulnerable populations from having access to the internet to participate in democratic processes such as processes of co-creation of public inclusion policy.
- **Fabrizio Scrollini, Founder Director of the Latin-American Initiative for Open Data (ILDA):** [Presentation](#)
Latin America needs to make progress in terms of data openness as well as in promoting their use.

Also, in the digitalization process, it is necessary to identify the use of algorithms in the public sector as a governance instrument. In this process, there is a need to structure governance frameworks for the adoption of new technologies that represent the needs and specificities of the population of the region. It is necessary not to fall into the utopic idea that technology can solve what are basically political challenges. It is relevant to have capacity to establish dialogues and policies that are specific to the region and to incorporate elements to strengthen regional democracies in a context in which digitalization offers great opportunities but also great challenges.

- **Doris Põld, CEO, Estonian ICT Cluster, Estonia:** [Presentation](#)
In the digital age, it is necessary to reflect on how the government can make life easier for citizens through digitalization. This process requires putting the citizen at the center. In order to achieve the desired results political will plays a fundamental role.
Digital services seek to encourage participation through inclusion and provide the opportunity to reach those who are most difficult to access.
Finally, it is necessary to be reflect constantly on the skills required for digitalization, with the aim of developing digital skills for different population groups and ensuring that no one is excluded.
 - **Pedro Vaca Villarreal, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, IACHR:** [Presentation](#)
The Internet is a platform for the exercise of human rights and constitutes a very powerful instrument to demand more transparency in the behavior of those who exercise power, to access information, and to facilitate active citizen participation in the construction of democratic societies. Access to public information through the Internet empowers citizens to actively participate in democratic processes. The deliberate dissemination of false information impoverishes public debate and results in an obstacle to participate in democratic decisions, therefore, it is necessary to responsibly diagnose the risks and to face the challenges that concern digitalization to achieve a free, safe, secure, and inclusive internet.
4. Closing remarks by the Department for Effective Public Management of the Secretariat for Hemispheric Affairs of the OAS, **Director María Fernanda Trigo.** [Remarks](#)

Acknowledgment of the participation of the speakers while endorsing the commitment to continue supporting public institutions in the mission of bolster transparency and citizen participation mechanisms with the aim of strengthening democracy and human rights in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

- Digital democracy does not replace political discussion, but technology facilitates the implementation of the objectives that have been democratically adopted.
- Open digital democracy strengthens the principles of government, transparency, participation, collaboration, accountability, greater access to public information and fosters fluid communication between government, citizens, and all the different actors in society.
- The digital transformation must contemplate digital rights, inclusion, respect for human rights and the rule of law.
- It is possible to maximize the benefits of technology for the use of governments, citizens, the private sector, and society in general through adequate regulation of the use of data and algorithms.
- In the digitalization process it is necessary to put the citizen at the center.

- The implementation of digital democracy entails risks that need to be addressed in a multidimensional manner from the regional sphere in order to enjoy the benefits that it brings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that digital transformation strategies reinforce the human dimension, observing the protection and promotion of digital rights.
- Strengthen citizen trust through the implementation of transparency and accountability mechanisms, facilitating citizen participation and generating more civic spaces, through the Internet and new technologies.
- Act from various fronts; civil society, corporations, journalism, governments, and multilateralism, for the formulation of shared solutions regarding the challenges of digital democracy.
- Invite reflection on how to encourage leading voices to be much more aware of the impact of their speeches.
- Ensure a free, open, safe, and inclusive internet.
- Work towards the development of adequate regulation on the use of data and algorithms.

RECORDING: <https://youtu.be/BVZp8VHvaUM>

Webinar

11 de julio de 2022
11:00 a.m. (Washington, D.C.)
10:00 a.m. (Lima, Perú)

OPORTUNIDADES Y DESAFÍOS DE LA DEMOCRACIA DIGITAL EN LAS AMÉRICAS

DIRIGIDO A:
Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil en Preparación a la 52ª Asamblea General De La OEA

Embajador Harold Kirslyth
Representante Permanente del Perú ante la OEA

María Fernanda Trigo
Directora, Departamento para la Gestión Pública Electora de la OEA

Daniel Immerarity
Director del Instituto de Gobernanza Democrática, España

Elaine Ford
Directora Fundadora de Democracia Digital, Perú

Anabel Cruz
Directora Fundadora del Instituto de Comunicación y Desarrollo, Uruguay

Fabrizio Scrollini
Director Fundador de la Iniciativa Latinoamericana por los Datos Abiertos (ILDA)

Pedro Vaca V.
Becario Especial para la Libertad de Expresión, OEA

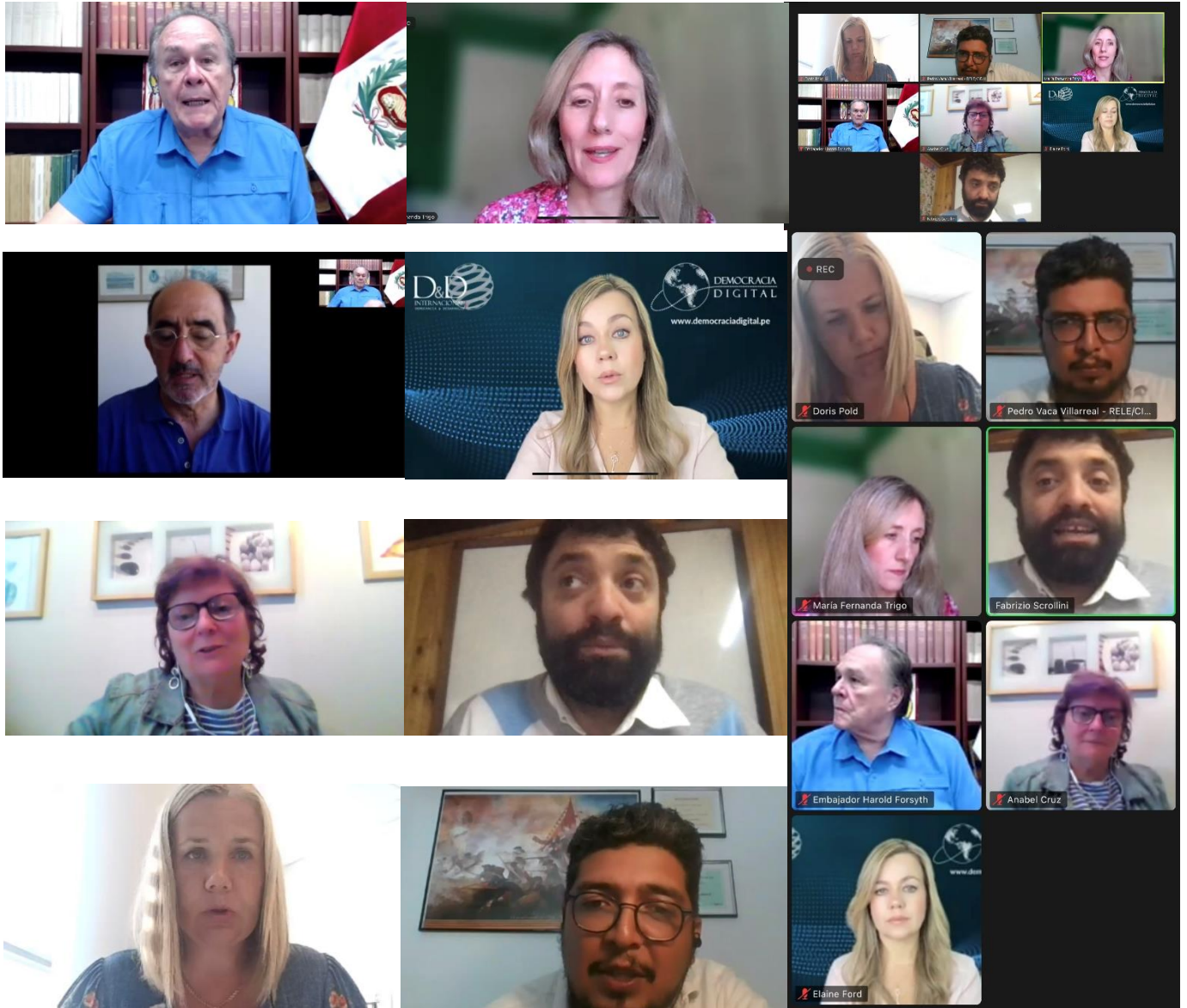
Doris Páidi
CEO, Estímas ICT Cluster




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PHOTOGRAPHS



BIOGRAPHIES OF DISCUSSANTS

Daniel Innerarity, Director of the Institute for Democratic Governance, Spain



Daniel Innerarity He is a professor of political and social philosophy, an IKERBASQUE researcher at the University of the Basque Country and director of the Institute of Democratic Governance. He is also a professor at the European University Institute in Florence and visiting professor at multiple universities around the world. He is a Doctor of Philosophy and a regular collaborator of opinion in *El País* and *El Correo / Diario Vasco* and *La Vanguardia*, as well as in the magazine *Claves de Razón Práctical*. He is the author of innumerable publications where he highlights "The democracy of knowledge".

He has received the Prince of Viana Prize for Culture in 2013 granted by the Government of Navarra. This award recognizes the trajectory of relevant people or entities in the world of culture.

Elaine Ford, Founder Director of Digital Democracy, Peru



Elaine is director and founder of Democracy & Development International (D&D International) based in Lima, Peru. She is the director and creator of Digital Democracy that she promotes for Peru and Latin America from D & D International. She was president of the Peru Chapter of the Internet Society (ISOC) for two consecutive periods from 2016 to 2021 and was a member of the ISOC Chapters Advisory Council Steering Committee in 2019 and 2020. Member of the Committee of Women Leaders of the Americas and member of the Advisory Board of Women In Tech. Elaine obtained the "Peru Bicentennial Order of Values" Award (Peru, 2021), the "International Woman Leader and Entrepreneur" Award (Peru, 2019), the "Ibero-American Leader Woman 2018" Award (Peru, 2018), "Young Leader" Award from the International Foundation for Young Leaders (Argentina, 2010) and was designated "Distinguished Guest" by the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights, of the School of Law of the University of Cincinnati in Ohio (United States). Likewise, Elaine is the author of the books: "Digital technologies and elections in Peru" (2021). "The challenge of digital democracy. Towards an interconnected citizenship" (2019), presented in Lima, Berlin and different cities in Latin America; She is editor and co-author of the book "Internet and Pandemic in the Americas. First health crisis in the digital age" (2020) published in Spanish and English.

Anabel Cruz, Founder Director of the Institute of Communication and Development, Uruguay



Anabel Cruz is Uruguayan and the founding director of the Institute of Communication and Development (ICD), a civil society organization based in Uruguay whose mission is to promote citizen and civil society participation through research, training, dissemination activities of information and development of tools for institutional strengthening. Anabel is currently the Civil Society Co-President of the Steering Committee of the Partnership for Open Government 2022 - 2023. Likewise, Anabel is the Co-Coordinator of the Accountability Regional Initiative, a network with partners in 10 countries in the region that promotes transparency and accountability of civil society, and is also the president of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

Fabrizio Scrollini, Founder Director of the Latin-American Initiative for Open Data (ILDA)



Fabrizio Scrollini is the Executive Director of the Latin American Initiative for Open Data (ILDA), and a member of the Open Data Network for Development (OD4D). He is Co-founder of Abrelatam and Condatos, as well as one of the advisors of the International Open Data Charter. He has worked with governments, regulatory agencies, and local and international civil society organizations on issues related to transparency, access to public information, open data, and public sector reform. Fabrizio holds a PhD in Government from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

Doris Põld, CEO, Estonian ICT Cluster



Mrs. Doris Põld is the General Director of the Estonian Telecommunication and Information Technology Association and the Estonian ICT Cluster, which promotes the cooperation of Estonian telecommunication and IT companies and organizations in the development of Estonia towards the society of the information, protecting and representing the interests of its members and expressing their common positions and their ability to support construction and education of the workforce of the IT sector in Estonia. She also supports the internationalization and implementation of innovation projects of Estonian ICT companies. Doris Põld has been accredited as an expert in ESCA benchmarking and has worked as a consultant for the construction of clusters in other countries. In addition to that, she has 20 years of experience in the implementation of different EU projects at national and international level.

Pedro Vaca Villarreal, Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, IACHR



Pedro Vaca Villarreal is the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) since October 6, 2020. Colombian, Lawyer from the National University of Colombia. He has a Master of Laws and a Specialization in Constitutional Law. He has more than 12 years of professional experience in the field of human rights. He has litigated on behalf of victims of grave violations of freedom of expression. From 2013 to 2020, he served as Executive Director of the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) in Colombia, he has extensive experience in organizational management, intersectoral dialogue, team articulation and networks. He teaches the Master's degree in journalism at the Universidad de los Andes. He led regional processes in defense of freedom of expression holding positions of responsibility, was a member of the Advisory Network of the Media Freedom Coalition and the Global Council of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX). He was part of the Unesco team for the training of judges in Bolivia, Mexico, and Colombia. He was a consultant for Freedom House for the Colombia chapter of the global report on Internet freedom and is co-founder of Presunto Podcast.

CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

(Prepared by the Department for Effective Public Management of the Secretariat for Hemispheric Affairs)

Advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) continually pose challenges that threaten stability and democratic governance while offering at the same time opportunities to promote citizen participation in democratic systems.

The lack of access to the internet or knowledge to handle ICTs, as well as low penetration or insufficient quality access to the internet or devices, are problems with adverse implications for democracy and development. Added to this is the concern generated by limits imposed by some restrictive regimes on internet access and digital freedom of expression.

Additionally, democratic institutions face risks as a result of the hyper-connectivity of some segments of citizens and unethical use of ICTs by interest groups, through which messages to citizens are manipulated towards ideologically biased digital media campaigns created on social networks aimed at influencing social sentiment towards government institutions.

Governance and disinformation

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and address the concerning disinformation issue that societies have been facing worldwide. For example, countries in the Americas have been vulnerable to online misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during recent electoral processes. The Internet and the various digital platforms facilitate making misleading content viral towards deceiving social objectives. In addition, this content tends to exacerbate polarization and is often loaded with hate speech. All this leads to the fragmentation of societies and cracks the essence of democratic coexistence.

In this context, the Latin American region is no stranger to the great challenges posed by restrictions or advances in ICTs for the consolidation of democracy through digital means. The adverse implications for the full exercise of citizenship or the stability of democratic institutions due to these digital challenges are of concern. For this, it is necessary to reflect on the efforts being made to mitigate the effects of online disinformation, which safeguards the rights and freedoms of the people without affecting the digital ecosystem.

More access and better and more transparent digital public services

According to the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies ITU, only about half of the world's population uses the Internet¹. Although only 23% of the population in the Americas does not have access to the internet, it is estimated that this represents at least 300 million people who do not have access.

In the first place, the lack of access to the internet, devices, and technologies, marginalizes citizens from access to government services, related information, and government open data; or to participate, express themselves, or know the partisan political proposals at the time of elections, as well as the governments' whereabouts in managing public resources and the fulfillment of campaign promises.

Likewise, in the case of public administrations, the implications of inadequate use of ICTs delegitimize them as the actors that transfer the benefits of democracy to citizens in the form of better and more transparent public services. On the contrary, the disenchantment of citizens with public institutions has proven to be the engine of a renewed movement of social protests in Latin America; certainly, exacerbated by the health and economic crisis generated by the COVID-19 virus pandemic.

On this point, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE), have expressed, in the context of the pandemic², "concern about the serious limitations in the lack of internet access in the region of the most vulnerable sectors", identifying that "indigenous communities, inhabitants of rural areas, women, Afro-descendants, children and adolescents are disproportionately suffering limitations in the access and affordability of digital technologies".

¹UIT, Inclusión digital para todos, Hechos y cifras de las TIC 2019.

² Resolución 1/2020 sobre pandemia y Derechos Humanos, y Comunicado de Prensa R/206/20, RELE, CIDH.

On the other hand, the digital divide not only hinders access to citizens' rights and affects the operations for agile and transparent delivery of services by governments, but also threatens competitiveness and reduces the opportunity for companies and businesses to generate economic development.

Finally, in terms of digital government, the Americas is a diverse and unequal region. The region has countries that are part of the group of the most digitally advanced governments in the world (DN3) as is the case of Canada and Uruguay, but at the same time, the region has countries that linger behind in the lower part of the digital government development rankings among 193 nations such as Venezuela, Nicaragua, Honduras, Cuba, and Haiti, according to the UN e-Government development index⁴.

It is important to point out that the digital divide is not only critical at the country level in the Americas, but also at the regional level. The effects of this situation on integration and the strengthening of democracy are worrying and are reflected in transnational scenarios of corruption such as the Odebrecht case, or in the social destabilization that deepens migratory crisis.

Challenges

It is important to note that, given the recent commitments adopted by the Presidents and Chiefs of Government at the IX Summit of the Americas, specifically the Digital Transformation Commitment, it is essential to reflect on measures that can address that digital transformation in the Americas is inclusive and contributes to reducing inequality gaps, including digital, and strengthening democratic governance, and not the other way around.

Based on the foregoing and in preparation for the 52nd OAS General Assembly taking place in Lima, Peru in October of this year, and whose core theme is "Together against Inequality and Discrimination", the purpose of this virtual event is to be a space for dialogue and reflection on the impact of the opportunities and challenges of digital democracy in facing the digital divide in the Americas.

This session will then seek to find answers to questions such as: Why is it relevant for the quality of democracy to reduce the digital divide? What role do governments and the private technology sector play in strengthening digital democracy? How does online disinformation threaten democracy? What are the greatest concerns of civil society in facing the digital divide? And what are the biggest obstacles that governments face in reducing the digital divide and strengthening digital democracy?

¹ Digital Nations es el foro internacional de los gobiernos digitales líderes fundado en el 2014.

² Encuesta sobre e-Gobierno, 2020. ONU.



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Webinar

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS

FOR:
Civil society organizations in preparation for the **52dn OAS General Assembly**

 **July 11, 2022**

11:00 a.m. (Washington, D.C.)
10:00 a.m. (Lima, Perú)

