

## Democracy and e-Participation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Freitas, Christiana Soares

*FACE da Universidade de Brasilia (UnB)*

 freitas.christiana@gmail.com

Cardoso, Victor

*Research Group on State, Regulation, Internet and Society, Brasil*

 victorcardosog2@gmail.com

Andrade, Soraya Zacarias Drumond

*Executive Secretariat. Ministry of Health. / Research Group on State, Regulation, Internet and Society*

 Sorayazd.andrade@gmail.com

Documento recibido:

03 marzo 2019

Aprobado para publicación:

22 julio 2019

---

### Abstract

The article aims at analyzing verifiable implications of e-participation initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean. The central issue at stake is whether e-participation networks – developed for political activism on the internet – really contribute to the development and legitimacy of democratic practices. To answer this question a research was carried out with the goal of mapping and analyzing five hundred and twenty-six e-participation initiatives of the region available at the database of Latinno project. Specific goals included identifying the implications of the initiatives and their effective results; analyzing the repercussions according to their means and ends; developing a comparative analysis of the implications of the initiatives regarding several characteristics such as their degree of formalization and influence in decision-making processes. Also of interest was to analyze the non-intentional results and different modes of policy action related to the initiatives studied. The initiatives tend to consolidate and reinforce democratic practices; increase communication channels between government and citizens; enhance citizens' representation possibilities and strengthen legal and political mechanisms for social control. Nevertheless, there is still a significantly small number of initiatives that show effective and identifiable results. A high penetrability of the initiatives in formal political processes increases the chances of e-participation initiatives become means of consolidating and legitimizing democratic processes and practices.

### Keywords

Democratic Innovation; e-Participation; Results; Public Policies.

---

## Resumo

O objetivo do artigo é analisar as implicações verificáveis das iniciativas de participação eletrônica na América Latina e no Caribe. O tema central em jogo é se as redes de participação eletrônica, desenvolvidas para o ativismo político na Internet, realmente contribuem para o desenvolvimento e a legitimidade das práticas democráticas. Para responder a essa questão, foi realizada uma investigação com o objetivo de mapear e analisar 526 iniciativas de participação eletrônica da região disponíveis no banco de dados do Projeto Latinno. Os objetivos específicos incluíram a identificação das implicações das iniciativas e seus resultados efetivos; analisar as repercussões de acordo com suas médias e fins, desenvolvendo uma análise comparativa das implicações das iniciativas em relação a diversas características, como o grau de formalização e influência nos processos decisórios. Também foi interessante analisar os resultados não intencionais e os diferentes modos de ação política relacionados às iniciativas estudadas. As iniciativas tendem a consolidar e reforçar práticas democráticas; aumentar os canais de comunicação entre o governo e os cidadãos; melhorar as possibilidades de representação cidadã e fortalecer mecanismos legais e políticos de controle social. No entanto, ainda há um número significativamente pequeno de iniciativas que mostram resultados eficazes e identificáveis. A alta penetração de iniciativas em processos políticos formais aumenta as possibilidades de iniciativas de participação eletrônica se tornarem meios para consolidar e legitimar processos e práticas democráticas..

## Palavras chave

Inovação democrática; e-Participação; Resultados; Políticas Públicas

## Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es analizar las implicaciones verificables de las iniciativas de participación electrónica en América Latina y el Caribe. El tema central en juego es si las redes de participación electrónica, desarrolladas para el activismo político en Internet, contribuyen realmente al desarrollo y la legitimidad de las prácticas democráticas. Para responder a esta pregunta se realizó una investigación con el objetivo de mapear y analizar 526 iniciativas de participación electrónica de la región disponibles en la base de datos del proyecto Latinno. Los objetivos específicos incluyeron la identificación de las implicaciones de las iniciativas y sus resultados efectivos; analizar las repercusiones según sus medios y fines desarrollando un análisis comparativo de las implicaciones de las iniciativas con respecto a varias características, como su grado de formalización e influencia en los procesos de toma de decisiones. También fue interesante analizar los resultados no intencionales y los diferentes modos de acción política relacionados con las iniciativas estudiadas. Las iniciativas tienden a consolidar y reforzar las prácticas democráticas; aumentar los canales de comunicación entre el gobierno y los ciudadanos; mejorar las posibilidades de representación ciudadana y fortalecer los mecanismos legales y políticos para el control social. Sin embargo, todavía hay un número significativamente pequeño de iniciativas que muestran resultados efectivos e identificables. Una alta penetrabilidad de las iniciativas en los procesos políticos formales aumenta las posibilidades de que las iniciativas de participación electrónica se conviertan en medios para consolidar y legitimar procesos y prácticas democráticas.

## Palabras clave

Innovación democrática; e-Participación; Resultados; Políticas Públicas.

## 1. Introduction

The working paper aims at presenting and discussing research results that analyze the effective implications of e-participation democratic innovations in Latin America and the Caribbean. Democratic innovations are projects or institutions designed to increase citizens' participation in political processes. According to this theoretical perspective, what qualifies a specific institutional design as a democratic innovation is its goal of promoting citizens' participation (Pogrebinschi, 2017). That participation is not an end but a means to achieve other political goals such as significant interference in formal political processes<sup>1</sup>.

During the last decades, governments from Latin America and the Caribbean adopted several strategies to stimulate citizens' political participation using internet resources. However, several research results reveal a limited reach of those government strategies for e-participation. Instead, they appear more as facilitators of institutional stability and legitimacy than effective tools to stimulate and incorporate citizens' demands to formal political processes (Freitas; Ewerton, 2018).

E-participation initiatives have been one of the most used means to implement strategies for the development of democratic practices in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Government actors, international, private and civil society organizations recognize the importance of the information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance and deepen democratic processes. However, there is a constant observed need to improve their implications regarding decision-making processes.

Digital environments enable specific social and political configurations. Contemporary political movements are usually constituted by networks with a polycentric structure. Actors responsible for actions in digital environments plan interventions without necessarily relying on organizational resources. The context suggests new and alternate ways to define the act of being politically engaged (Bennett; Segerberg, 2013; Coleman, 2017). However, it does not show an unequivocally relation between cyberactivism and democracy.

This article seeks to understand into what extent the networks built for political cyberactivism are in fact contributing to the development and legitimacy of democratic practices in Latin America and the Caribbean. To conduct this inquiry the research mapped and analyzed democratic innovations adopting e-participation strategies. The research identified five hundred and twenty-six (526) e-participation initiatives available at the Latinno project's database<sup>2</sup> (Pogrebinschi, 2017).

The main inquiry guiding the research asks whether it is possible – or not – to actually verify tangible implications of e-participation initiatives transforming institutions, political and government processes. Would it be possible to sustain the assumption that e-participation tools are essential to consolidate and deepen participative democratic practices in Latin America and the Caribbean? The main goal of the research, therefore, was to analyze the effective implications of e-participation initiatives for formal political processes, guaranteeing – or not – democratic legitimacy to political practices driven by them.

---

<sup>1</sup> Formal political processes are understood as the set of mechanisms responsible for the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies and other political artifacts. The actors responsible for the development of those formal political processes are the ones representing the executive, legislative and judiciary power (VIANA, 1996, p. 15).

<sup>2</sup> The data were collected on May, 2018. The platform is constantly updated so it is possible to find more initiatives nowadays.

The specific goals were to identify the initiatives' implications and their actual results influencing formal political processes such as the agenda-setting, decision-making procedures, formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies. Also of interest was to analyze the initiatives' repercussions according to their means and ends. The third specific goal was to analyze their results based on the degree of formalization or institutionalization of the initiative.

Some hypothesis guided the research. The first hypothesis verified the statement that institutionalized innovations – backed up by public policies or specific laws – tend to have more effective results than others. The second hypothesis affirms that a hybrid model of the innovation's design – combining various means and ends – tends to generate more outputs and outcomes than the single mode ones.

## 2. Theoretical and methodological framework

Internet has always been seen as a tool for change and a means to guarantee and strengthen democracy especially through innovations that would boost citizens' engagement in decision-making processes. These utopian ideas can be observed in the beginning of the internet itself. From cyberlibertarians – defending the idea that no government would be able to control cyberspace (Barlow, 1996) – to digital democracy's contemporary enthusiasts, the idea of the internet as a means to transform, deepen and consolidate democracy – especially participative democracy – has always been present. To verify this perspective the research analyzed the path taken by citizens' demands from their participation in e-initiatives to some kind of verifiable interference in government processes, becoming – or not – a political or legal artifact.

Citizens' demands for actions, programs and public policies are usually fluid, punctual and fragmented. Digital environments make them easily accessible and available. The democratic quality of their results or products can be evaluated in terms of their extension and content. In other words, their quality and legitimacy can be verifiable through indicators of their reach – meaning mostly the number of citizens, institutions and regions affected – and their penetration in formal political processes. Thus, citizens' demands will have democratic legitimacy if they produce identifiable outputs and outcomes. The concepts of output and outcome do not refer only to effects on public policies but include also various government actions – local or not –, institutional processes, laws and mechanisms related to the formulation of policies and projects in a broader sense. According to this conception, democratic legitimacy is established when a political system not only stimulates citizens' inputs but also includes them in the elaboration of laws, public policies and other government actions. If that doesn't happen, there is an absence of democratic legitimacy (Coleman, 2017).

The design of communicational practices is one of the significant means to outline forms of exercising power in a given society. The various modes of political manifestation through digital environments promote different possibilities of citizens' engagement and demands' systematization (or inputs). Inputs, according to Coleman, "(...) refer to the expression of political demands. The democratic quality of inputs can be evaluated in terms of the extent to which they are arrived at and supported fairly, reflectively and inclusively" (Coleman, 2017: 21).

Digital environments for cyberactivism will facilitate or, on the contrary, hinder the achievement of outputs and outcomes. Even though digital resources contribute to the creation of effective spaces for political deliberation that does not guarantee the success of an e-participation initiative. That success depends on a plurality of values, norms, practices and different sociotechnical mechanisms (Chadwick, 2009, p. 12). Also im-

portant to consider, is that democracy is not adopted and then mediated by technology. Rather, technology's mediation is responsible for democracy's constitution itself.

A design intended to foster crowdlaw practices has proven to be a significantly effective one to produce political repercussions (Freitas, 2018). Crowdlaw practices can be defined as strategies currently used by "(...) city councils at a local level and parliaments at the regional and national to engage with citizens at every stage of the law and policymaking process" (Noveck, 2018: 359). In crowdlaw initiatives, technological resources are used by policymakers to interact with a wider range of political actors thus broadening the possibilities of effective results.

According to the applied methodology, the results of a democratic innovation are identified as changes in formal political processes or in institutions. In this case, the initiative generated outputs and/or outcomes. Outputs exist as proposals to change specific procedures, laws or policies such as recommendations to specific programs or actions. A draft bill is an example of output. If it becomes a law, it becomes an outcome. The same happens regarding policies. If a specific recommendation becomes a public policy then that initial input had an actual outcome considered by the public power. Thus, outcomes refer to the laws and policies implemented and their social and political implications<sup>3</sup>.

The methodology considers outputs and outcomes as impact variables. The 526 e-participation initiatives were also analyzed according to their means and ends to verify the importance of the initiatives' formalization and to check the hypothesis related to the need to design a hybrid model for more effective results.

The e-participation initiatives were also analyzed according to the traditionally considered public policies' stages (Howlett; Ramesh; Perl, 2013). The goal was to evaluate the possibility of causal relations between results of the initiatives and their target in a specific policy cycle stage. Would there be, for instance, more initiatives with verifiable outputs and outcomes in a specific stage, such as in the agenda-setting or in the implementation phase? Into what extent their effectiveness could be related to the fact that they were focusing on a specific stage or, on the contrary, that would not mean significant variation to the results?

It is important to notice that this traditional public policy cycle theoretical framework is considered in accordance to Weber's concept of ideal type, meaning that there is awareness that this cycle does not correspond exactly to the existent practical reality. However, it gives reality a supposed order for analytic ends. It is then possible for researchers to isolate variables to comprehend the phenomenon. It represents a means to analyze a context even though impossible to grasp it as whole in all its complexity (Weber, 1991).

---

<sup>3</sup> The theory of Coleman considers only the concept of output. For the author, there is no distinction between outputs and outcomes such as we are considering here.

### 3. Implications of the e-participation initiatives

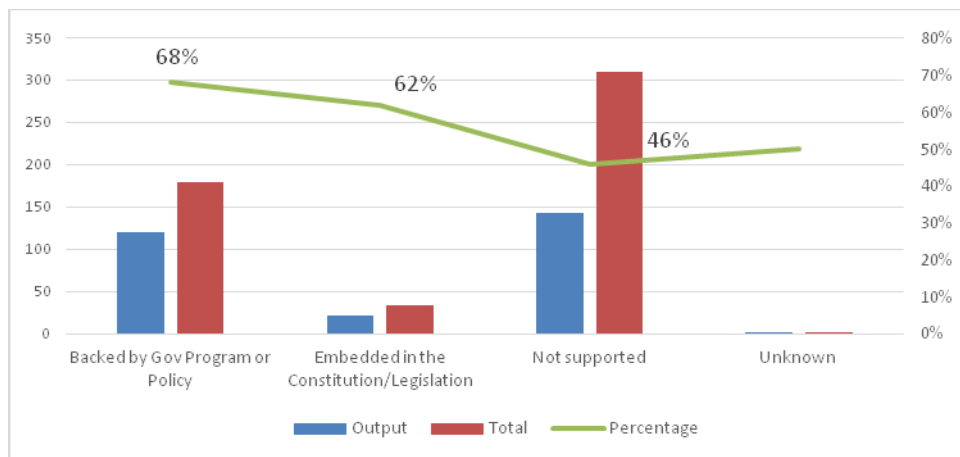
The research focused on understanding how e-participation initiatives promote – or not – legitimate democratic practices. That means investigating whether citizens’ inputs systematized by the e-initiatives were really considered by the public power – or by formal political processes. The legitimacy of digital democratic innovations relies on the established relation between inputs and outcomes.

The first analyzed data refer to the quantity of democratic innovations that produced identifiable results. From the 526 e-participation initiatives analyzed, 286 generated outputs (or 54,3% from the total). Only 112 (or 21,3%) produced outcomes. The results indicate that the quantity of initiatives that really achieve their goals in terms of materializing citizens’ demands into formal political results is far less than the total, calling into question their legitimacy.

#### 3.1. Formalization and Results

The formalization of the initiatives indicates whether public policies, government programs, specific actions or laws back them up. The hypothesis guiding the analysis here affirms that the ones already backed up by any formal political or normative mechanism tend to have more outputs and outcomes than the ones not supported at all. The hypothesis was then confirmed. From the 286 initiatives that generated outputs, the highest percentage of outcomes was reached by the initiatives that were backed up by political mechanisms such as public policies and government programs. Legal or political support given to an e-participation initiative is one of the determinant factors for its success as a democratic tool as illustrated by the next figure.

**Figure 01 - Quantity and percentage of outputs according to formalization**



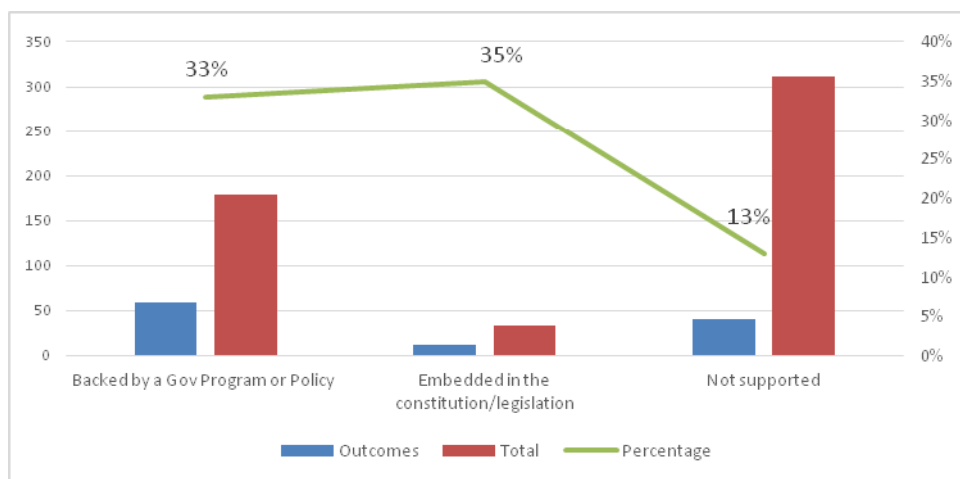
Source: the authors, 2018.

As it can be observed in the figure 1, from the total of innovations not backed up by any formal mechanism, 46% of them generated outputs. From the initiatives determined in law, 62% generated outputs<sup>4</sup> and from those that received political support – such as being considered as mandatory in a public policy or other official artifact – 68% of them generated outputs.

Despite of a higher quantity of innovations without any kind of institutional support, the percentage of outputs achieved by them is quite lower than the one observed regarding the innovations with some kind of legal provision. It is quite clear, therefore, that this support is significant to promote initiatives’ legitimacy.

When analyzing the outcomes of the initiatives related to their formalization, the results clearly confirm the hypothesis. According to the next figure, only 13% of the innovations without any kind of support generated outcomes. In contrast, 33% of the initiatives backed up by formal political mechanisms produced results. The most effective way of guaranteeing outcomes seems to be the legal provision of a specific initiative. From the 34 innovations with this characteristic, 12 generated outcomes or 35% of the total.

**Figure 02 - Quantity and percentage of outcomes according to formalization**



Source: the authors, 2018.

Formalized innovations backed up by government programs, specific actions, public policies and especially the ones with legal provision tend to produce more results than the ones without a clear and formal support. There is a direct relation between formalization of the initiatives and their results. The lack of institutionalization tends to weaken the legitimacy of digital political practices.

### 3.2. Implications according to the initiatives’ means

There are four possible means to the development of a democratic innovation: e-participation, deliberation, direct vote and citizens’ representation (Pogrebinschi, 2016). These means are often combined in several

<sup>4</sup> Do total de 34 implementadas, 21 produziram outputs.

ways. However, a primary means always guides the initiative's practices and norms. One of our main hypotheses affirms that the combination of means – or the adoption of a hybrid model – is fundamental for the success of an e-participation initiative.

E-participation refers to democratic innovations that

*"(...) involve tools of information and communication technology (ICT). Democratic innovations that have e-participation as a primary means facilitate deliberation, direct voting, or both (as secondary means). They must involve some sort of citizen engagement, and not simply open access to data or information. The most recurrent digital innovations in Latin America include crowdsourcing legislation, collaborative policymaking, collaborative administration, interactive policy platforms, and online and multi-channel participatory budget" (Pogrebinschi, 2016).*

Another possible primary means used by initiatives is the adoption of deliberative strategies. In this case, the innovations focus on " (...) deliberation among citizens themselves, and among citizens and state officials or private stakeholders. These include all forms of interaction in which participants have the chance to voice their positions and hear the position of others<sup>5</sup>" (Pogrebinschi, 2016).

Direct voting is also a possibility of structuring e-participation practices. These strategies imply the use of direct democracy traditional tools such as plebiscite, referenda and various forms of consultation. Finally, the design of citizens' representation strategies include several methods of selecting citizens to "(...) speak for others or on behalf of others"<sup>6</sup> (Pogrebinschi, 2016).

One of the goals of the research was to verify if the initiatives that combine means to achieve their ends tend to produce more results. In fact, the initiatives that use the means of e-participation combined with other means such as direct voting, deliberation or citizens' representation tend to generate more results.

The combination of e-participation and direct voting was the most effective strategy. From the total of initiatives using this strategy, 89% of the total generated outputs. On the other hand, the initiatives that relied only on e-participation practices and possibilities were the ones less effective. From 333 initiatives, only 143 – or 43% - of them produced outputs.

The same tendency was observed when analyzing the results regarding the outcomes. As seen in figure 3, the combination of e-participation strategies, deliberation and direct voting mechanisms tends to generate more results.

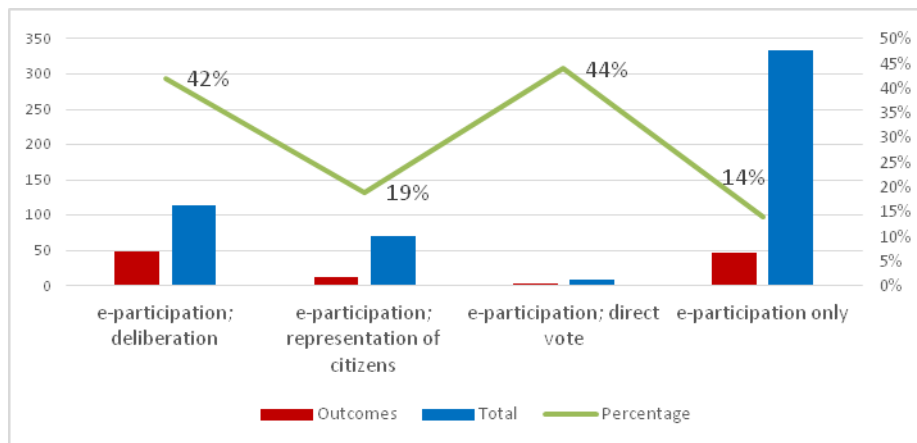
---

<sup>5</sup> According to Pogrebinschi, "(...) deliberative innovations are thus not only about voicing opinions or demands; they also require interaction and exchange. Interaction among participants – which often involves different stakeholders, public and private – often creates forms of communicative exchange that make possible eventual changes of positions and preferences. Deliberative innovations may involve activities as varied as problem identification and handling, definition of priorities and management of resources, opinion formation and advising, the making and the implementation of decisions, as well as oversight of institutional performance and evaluation of policies (Pogrebinschi, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> More information about this topic can be found at: [www.latinno.net](http://www.latinno.net).



Figure 03 – Quantity and percentage of outcomes according to the initiatives’ means



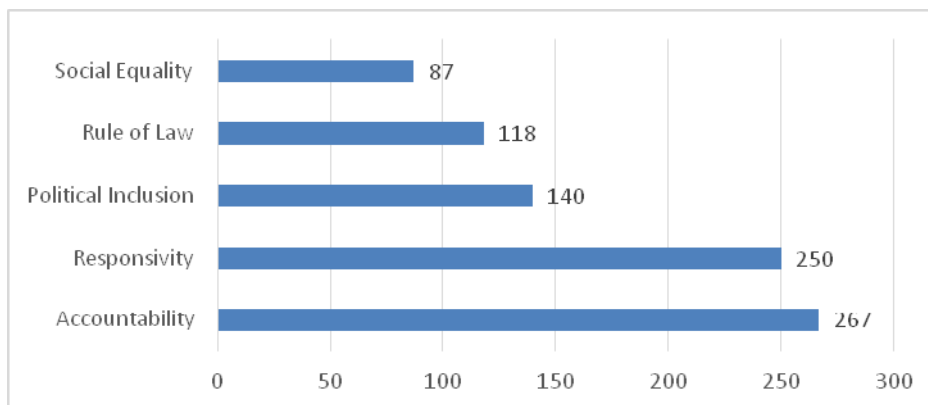
Source: the authors, 2018.

### 3.3. Implications according to the initiatives’ ends

The e-participation initiatives evolve according to specific ends. There are five possible ends of a democratic innovation: accountability; responsivity; rule of law; political inclusion and social equality. Important to notice that those ends "(...) are not mutually exclusive and are often combined<sup>7</sup>" (Pogrebinschi, 2016, p. 34).

From the analyzed initiatives, 267 of them (or 50,7% from the total) are being developed with the aim of promoting accountability as shown in the next figure.

Figure 4 – Initiatives according to their ends



Source: the authors, 2018.

Accountability embraces

*"(...) all non-electoral forms of rendering governments, institutions, elected officials and representatives accountable, i.e. answerable and responsible for their actions and inactions. Democratic innovations aiming at enhancing accountability may carry out activities as diverse as the*

<sup>7</sup> The definitions regarding the five ends are available at: <https://www.latinno.net/pt/concepts/>.

*monitoring of institutional performance, the disclosure of public information, the sanctioning of public agents, and the oversight of public services delivery. Deliberation plays a key role in the act of reporting, which may be written or oral, and is quite frequent in innovations whose end is responsiveness” (Pogrebinschi, 2016, p. 34).*

The responsivity goal is defined as “(...) forms of expression of political preferences of citizens and the corresponding consideration by governments” (Pogrebinschi, 2017). This end exists in almost half of the studied initiatives (250 out of 526). There are 87 initiatives that aim at promoting social equality; 140 that target political inclusion and 118 focusing on the Rule of Law.

The research verified if the initiatives that combine several ends tend to produce more effective results. The initiatives that produced outcomes are the ones combining two or three ends or goals. From the 526 studied initiatives, 354 (or 67% of the total) were developed to achieve more than one end. From 172 initiatives developed to attain only one aim, only 16% generated outcomes. When we look at the percentage of initiatives aiming at more than one goal, 24% of them produced results. Thus, as suggested by the initial hypothesis, effective results are more frequently observed in the initiatives that combine ends.

### **3.4. Impacts of e-participation initiatives on Public policies**

The research was also interested in understanding the impact of e-participation initiatives on public policies. For this purpose, we analyzed their outputs and outcomes associated to the traditionally known five stages of policy-making processes<sup>8</sup> (Howlett; Ramesh; Perl, 2013). e-Participation initiatives are distributed in a rather homogeneous way throughout the stages associated to the public policy cycle: agenda-setting; formulation; decision-making or policy adoption; policy implementation and evaluation. It is worth highlighting that the initiatives usually focus on more than one stage simultaneously.

In general, the studied initiatives are homogeneously distributed among the five stages. Out of 526 analyzed initiatives, 165 of them – or 31% of the total – have the primarily intention of interfering in agenda-setting processes; 27% focus their attention in the stage of public policy formulation, always combined with actions related to other stages. When observing the decision-making process, also 27% of the initiatives were identified. The public policy implementation has the attention of 36% of the initiatives and 37% aim at interfering in the evaluation and monitoring stage.

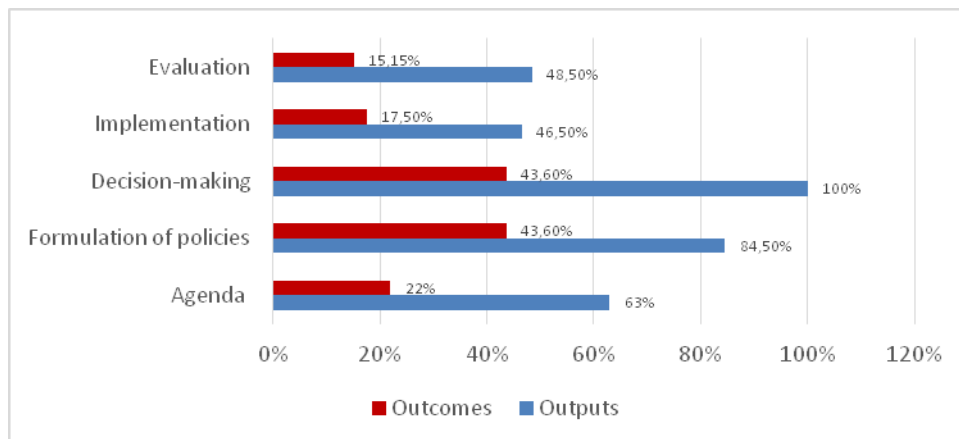
Despite of having a significant amount of initiatives destined to interfere in the implementation and evaluation stages, initiatives focusing on the public policy formulation phase have a higher percentage of success. As shown in the next figure, from the 165 innovations dedicated to the agenda-setting stage, 104 – or 63% of them – produced outputs. When analyzing the outcomes, the percentage drops to 22%, meaning that only 36 of them generated some kind of identifiable result. The same can be observed in the other stages of the cycle. From the 142 initiatives aiming at formulating public policies, 120 of them – or 84% – generated outputs and only 62 of them – or 43% – produced verifiable results as outcomes. In the decision-making stage, all of the 142 initiatives produced outputs but only 62 of them – or 43% – generated outcomes.

---

<sup>8</sup> The data collected regarding the public policies' stages associated to the initiatives' results are exploratory and still in the early stages of the research thus with no hypothesis guiding the inquiry yet.

Figure 5 shows 189 initiatives mapped in the implementation stage. From that total, 88 produced outputs and only 33 achieved outcomes. From the total of 198 initiatives focusing on the evaluation phase, 96 generated outputs – or 48% of them. The percentage of outcomes in this stage is significantly low – 15% of the initiatives (or just 30 of them) caused any kind of repercussion in formal political processes. Since interfering in this specific stage means changing political practices usually institutionalized or part of the political culture of a country it can be naturally harder to cause impacts. Research is being conducted to deepen the understanding about this context.

**Figure 05 - Outputs and Outcomes according to the public policy cycle**



Source: the authors, 2018.

### 3.5. Unintentional results

Digital democratic innovations can be explicitly planned to change government actions or policies such as the greater monitoring of public expenditure, publicity of information and collectively detecting a problem or finding a solution. As seen, crowdlaw practices have proven to be significantly effective in promoting those changes (Alsina; Martí, 2018).

The initiatives can generate unpredicted or unexpected actions influencing formal political processes. It's the case of the initiative called *Chega de Fiu Fiu*. Olga Foundation created the digital platform. It collects data that are collaboratively entered in the platform by women in Brazil who suffered some kind of sexual harassment. Recently the Public Prosecutor of the State of São Paulo established a partnership with Olga Foundation to use the produced data to plan its campaign to stop violence against women.

That is a clear example of an outcome produced by an e-participation initiative. Even though their creators did not have the initial intention of producing results to impact on formal political processes, the built network generated repercussions. The implications can be in any stage of the public policy cycle. It will depend on governments' and citizens' demands in a specific historical period.

Other platforms such as *Onde fui roubado* – where a georeferenced map of urban areas of the city can be used by citizens to inform exactly where and when a robbery, assault or other crimes occurred – have also produced unintentional results that can be seen as externalities – being them positive or not. In the case of the latter example, for instance, the artifact produces information used either by government actors and institutions or by organized crime (Freitas; Ewerton, 2018).

Initiatives that were not created to produce outputs or outcomes in their beginning may end up doing so unintentionally and with unpredictable consequences, collaborating thus to the formation of new democratic political practices and the development of specific symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2011).

The studied initiatives point out a tendency. The diversity of conceptions, principles and interests of citizens acting in several democratic innovations leads to multiple political forms of action developed in a context characterized by the pulverization of decision-making processes and the reconfiguration and restructuring of the used mechanisms for democratic control (Brousseau; Marzouki; Méadel, 2012).

## 4. Conclusions

The studied e-participation innovations are a clear expression of the historical period that most of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced for a few decades now. Participative democracy was strongly stimulated and citizens' engagement in political processes was encouraged. As a result, new ways of political participation emerged alongside new innovative designs for e-participation artifacts. The existence of some sustainable networks built in this period shows a tendency of amplifying and consolidating those arenas for democratic deliberation.

As seen, the existence of technological resources to promote political participation does not guarantee legitimate democratic practices. Some preconditions for the existence of democratic acts need to be fulfilled. The lack of those preconditions in almost all countries of the region may explain the reduced number of e-participation initiatives that present identifiable results. This research will continue to deepen the understanding of the region's historical and political context in order to better comprehend the effects of e-participation initiatives for strengthening democracy.

Even though the research observed a reduced number of successful initiatives, it can be said that they suggest a rise in social control, especially over public expenditure and the monitoring of political practices in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It was also observed a gradual institutionalization of a political culture with a focus on transparency mechanisms and digital political participation that are capable of reinforcing and strengthening democracy.

The formalization of democratic innovations is a fundamental factor to guarantee their success and sustainability. As seen, the e-participation initiatives that are backed up by government programs, public policies or other political and legal mechanisms tend to generate more results than others not supported at all. The hybrid model of the initiatives also tends to contribute to their continuity and to foster significant results.

In the exploratory research – relating the initiatives' results with the five stages of the public policy cycle – we found a higher quantity of innovations in the implementation and in the evaluation stages. However, those initiatives did not have a high percentage of results. The ones with more outcomes are the ones in the decision-making and in the public policy formulation stage. In these phases there are possibilities for implementing crowdlaw practices and incorporating citizens' demands in a more effective way since the public policy or other planned outcome is not yet a black box, meaning that it is still open to change. Further research is being conducted to deeply explore the achieved results and their implications.

The hybrid models shaping the studied innovations show that a digital sociotechnical environment generates diverse possibilities of political action and reveal the non-linearity present in the process of elaborating public policies and other legal and political processes.

One of the most interesting discoveries was the one related to the unintentional effects of the initiatives that can enhance democratic processes or, on the contrary, undermine them with their externalities. Initiatives not originally planned to interfere in government political processes can do so by generating outputs and outcomes in the public sphere.

Future research will contribute to deepen the analysis to support planning political strategies aiming at systematic and effective mechanisms to use the available data produced by the studied digital environments. The more diverse the range of actors using those data greater the possibility of generating outputs and outcomes and also guaranteeing legitimacy to democratic practices.

Potentially, the initiatives can collaborate to a long-term process of citizens' empowerment and political engagement. They can strengthen democratic processes by enabling direct actions of political participation. The digital environments reconfigure and reframe processes of social, political and symbolic control. More transparent actions and processes become possible. The initiatives tend to promote the increasing number of diverse groups of interest joining discussions and organizing political movements. Thus, minorities have more chance of engaging in collaborative decision-making processes.

The mentioned possibilities, however, depend on governments' political orientations in a given historical period. The expansion of digital networks for democratic actions is the result of a few decades of continued democracy in almost all countries of Latin America and the Caribbean – even though anti-democratic practices were occasionally observed. The continuity of the e-participation initiatives will depend on future political orientations that will guide government strategies in each country. Another fundamental factor to guarantee their continuity will be the consolidation of political practices based on social control over the public sphere through citizens' engagement.

Networks for cyberactivism – expressed through democratic innovations that use e-participation strategies – tend to consolidate and reinforce democratic practices by stimulating citizens' participation and engagement in political processes; facilitating the communication between citizens and government actors; improving ways to represent citizens in the public sphere and strengthening legal and political mechanisms for social control. The higher the penetrability of citizens' demands in formal political processes, more chances of the initiatives' results become, in fact, instruments aiming at consolidating and legitimizing participative democratic processes.

Networks for cyberactivism, therefore, appear as fundamental initiatives to achieve the necessary preconditions for the existence of legitimate democratic acts. They can be understood as means to deepen democratic principles in contemporary societies. The next important question to be answered is how to make the networks for cyberactivism more sustainable and effective, capable of strengthening democracy and engendering real political changes. 🌐

## References

- Alsina, V.; Martí, J. L. (2018). The Birth of the Crowdlaw Movement: tech-based citizen participation, legitimacy and the quality of lawmaking. *Analyse & Kritik*; 40(2): 337-358.
- Barlow, P. (1996). A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace. Disponível em: <https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence>
- Bennett, W.; Segerberg, A. (2013). *The logic of Connective Action: Digital Media and the Personalization of Contentious Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). "O campo político". *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política, Brasília*, n. 5, jan./jul. Disponível em: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0103-33522011000100008>.
- Brouseau, E.; Marzouki, M.; Méadel, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Governance, regulations, and powers on the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coleman, S. (2017) *Can the Internet Strengthen Democracy?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Chadwick, A. (2009) "Web 2.0: new challenges for the study of e-democracy in an era of informational exuberance". *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Informational Society*, v. 5, n. 1, p. 9-41.
- Freitas, C. S.; Aranha, M. I. (2017). "Commons como Motor de Inovação nas Sociedades Contemporâneas". In: *Communication Policy Research Latin America* (11.: 2017). CPRLatam /ed., Marcio Iorio Aranha [et al.]. Cartagena, Colombia: America's Information and Communications Research Network. ISSN 2177-3858 (Printed version); ISSN 2177-1634 (Electronic version).
- Freitas, C. S.; Ewerton, I. (2018). "Networks for Cyberactivism and their Implications for Policymaking in Brazil". In: *Alcaide-Muñoz, L; Alcaraz-Quiles, F. J. (Eds) Optimizing E-Participation Initiatives through Social Media*. Pennsylvania: IGI Global Disseminator of Knowledge. DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-5326-7.
- Howlett, M.; Ramesh, M.; Perl, A. (2013). *Política Pública: seus ciclos e subsistemas*. São Paulo: Elsevier Editora Ltda..
- Lindblom, C. (2013). *The policy making process*. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Foundations of Modern Political Science Series.
- Noveck, B. S. (2018). Crowdlaw: Collective Intelligence and Lawmaking. *Analyse & Kritik*, 2018; 40(2): 359-380.
- Pogrebinschi, T. (2016). "The Means and Ends of Participation: Democratic Innovations in Latin America". Artigo preparado para apresentação na Conferência do ECPR, Praga.
- (2017) *LATINNO Dataset*. Berlin: WZB.
- Silveira, S. A. (2017). *Tudo sobre tod@s. Redes digitais, privacidade e venda de dados pessoais*. ePub. ISBN: 9788594930286. Brasil.
- Surel, P.; Muller, Y. (2002). *A Análise das Políticas Públicas*. Pelotas: Editora da Universidade Católica de Pelotas.
- Viana, A. L. (1996). Abordagens metodológicas em políticas públicas. *Revista de Administração Pública, Rio de Janeiro*, v. 30, n. 2, p. 5-43, mar./abr.
- Weber, M. (1991). *Economia e sociedade: Fundamentos da Sociologia Compreensiva* Brasília, DF: Editora da Universidade de Brasília.

## Sobre los autores/ About the authors

Christiana Soares De Freitas Atualmente é Professora Adjunta IV do Programa de Pós-Graduação da Faculdade de Direito (FD) e do Curso de Graduação do Departamento de Gestão de Políticas Públicas da Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Ciências Contábeis (FACE) da Universidade de Brasília (UnB). É membro fundador e pesquisadora do Instituto Nacional de Ciência e Tecnologia em Democracia Digital (INCT.DD). É Coordenadora do eixo de Pesquisa sobre Direitos Humanos na Internet (Direitos Digitais) do Centro de Política Digital para América Latina (Latam Digital). É pesquisadora do Grupo de Investigación en Gobierno, Administración y Políticas Públicas (GIGAPP) freitas.christiana@gmail.com. Victor Cardoso. Graduated in Public Policy Management at the University of Brasília. Currently studying Information Technology at the Academy of Information Technology of Melbourne, Australia. Focus on data analysis and management. Also part of the research group on State, Regulation, Internet and Society (GERIS) of the University of Brasília (UnB). Has experience in public sector innovation analysis; legislative consultations dealing directly with the relationship between State and Private Sector. e-mail: victorcardosog2@gmail.com . Soraya Zacarias Drumond de Andrade Master in Public Health from the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Specialist in Project Management and Health Management at ESAD, graduated in Public Policy Management at UnB and in International Relations from IESB. Science and Technology Analyst currently assigned to the Executive Secretariat of the Ministry of Health. Researcher at the Research Group on State, Regulation, Internet and Society (GERIS). Has experience in public sector innovation, knowledge management, people management by skills, organizational design and analysis, international cooperation and public Health. Sorayazd.andrade@gmail.com.

## URL estable documento/stable URL

<http://www.gigapp.org/ewp>

El Grupo de Investigación en Gobierno, Administración y Políticas Públicas (GIGAPP) es una iniciativa impulsada por académicos, investigadores y profesores Iberoamericanos, cuyo principal propósito es contribuir al debate y la generación de nuevos conceptos, enfoques y marcos de análisis en las áreas de gobierno, gestión y políticas públicas, fomentando la creación de espacio de intercambio y colaboración permanente, y facilitando la construcción de redes y proyectos conjuntos sobre la base de actividades de docencia, investigación, asistencia técnica y extensión.

Las áreas de trabajo que constituyen los ejes principales del GIGAPP son:

1. Gobierno, instituciones y comportamiento político
2. Administración Pública
3. Políticas Públicas

Información de Contacto  
Asociación GIGAPP.  
ewp@gigapp.org