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## INVESTIGACIÓN

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### YOUTH AND THEIR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION THROUGH THE WIKI PARTIES AND THE DIGITAL PARTY IN MEXICO 2018

*Jóvenes y su participación ciudadana a través de los wiki partidos y el partido  
digital en México 2018*

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#### ABSTRACT

The credibility crisis that the Political Parties built for years and an almost general disenchantment with the way in which politics and the electoral reform that came into effect in January 2014 are exercised, are some of the indicators that caused a wave of Independent Candidacies whose results brought with them the partial oxygenation of the Mexican political system and opened a new debate on Citizen Empowerment. Inspired by the idea of a Wiki Party -where participation would be held through technology and social networks- and the models of the Pirate Parties in Germany and Sweden, different groups of young people throughout Mexico began the work of organizing a Wiki Party and a digital Party aimed at promoting Independent and Citizen Candidacies.

**KEY WORDS:** Citizen Participation - Network Society - Wiki Parties - Digital Party - Youth Empowerment.

#### RESUMEN

La crisis de credibilidad que durante años construyeron los Partidos Políticos y un desencanto casi generalizado en contra de la forma en que se ejerce la política y la reforma electoral que entró en vigor en enero de 2014, son algunos de los indicadores que provocaron que emergiera una oleada de Candidaturas Independientes cuyos resultados trajeron consigo la oxigenación parcial del sistema político mexicano y abrieron un nuevo debate sobre el Empoderamiento Ciudadano. Inspirados en la idea de un Wiki Partido –donde la participación fuese a través de las tecnologías y de las redes sociales---, y los modelos de los Partidos Piratas de Alemania y Suecia, distintos grupos de jóvenes en todo México comenzaron los trabajos de organización

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**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Participación Ciudadana - Sociedad Red - Wiki Partidos - Partido Digital - Empoderamiento Juvenil.

## JOVENS E SUA PARTICIPAÇÃO CIDADÃ ATRAVÉS DOS WIKI PARTIDOS E O PARTIDO DIGITAL NO MÉXICO 2018

### RESUMO

A crise de credibilidade que durante anos construíram os Partidos Políticos e um desencanto quase generalizado contra a forma em que se exerce a política e a reforma eleitoral que entrou em vigor em Janeiro de 2014, são alguns dos indicadores que fizeram com que emergisse uma onda de Candidaturas Independentes cujos resultados trouxeram a oxigenação parcial do sistema político mexicano e abriram um novo debate sobre o empoderamento Cidadão. Inspirados na ideia de um Wiki Partido – onde a participação fosse através das tecnologias e das redes sociais---, e os modelos dos Partidos Piratas da Alemanha e Suécia, diferentes grupos de jovens em todo México começaram os trabalhos de organização de um Wiki Partido e de um Partido Digital encaminados a impulsar Candidaturas Independentes e Cidadãs.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** Participação cidadã - Sociedade Red - Wiki Partidos - Partido Digital - Empoderamento Juvenil.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

“We must dynamite the power relations between institutions and factual powers from within in order to transform them.” Pedro Kumamoto (2018, February).

In Mexico today, the rejection of participatory has grown, making initiatives that suggest citizen leadership emerging outside the Parties stronger, which as an external force to the system, obliges it to transform itself. In this sense, this breath of fresh air in the upcoming years may come from an Independent Candidacy for Presidency, unique and with a program, with a campaign and government team, and

accompanied by a list of independent candidates. This way, the dispute over the future could be held between the executioners of participatory and its defenders and beneficiaries.

We propose the following hypothesis: The 2015 legislative elections, was the first appearance of the Federal Electoral Institute (INE) during elections, which, as consequence of the 2014 Electoral Reform, now intervenes directly and with its own powers in the local and federal electoral processes.

In this sense, it was placed in a panorama of social tension that spread to the extent of transmitting the behavior and discourse of the parties and candidates, making the electoral campaigns more coarse and polarized due to the abuses, excesses and arbitrariness committed by the Parties in a consistent and systematic way. It was promising to support the Wiki Parties, which promoted the Citizen and Independent Candidacies.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

We propose as a general objective: basing on a theoretical framework underpinned by the Network Society, the Wiki Parties, Youth Empowerment, the Digital Parties and Citizen Participation, to establish the bases to analyze the Independent Candidate Figure contained in the 2014 Electoral Reform which was tested in 2015 and 2018; especially that which has analytical and evaluative contents about the connected society, social mobilization and political disaffection, transparency and videocracy.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The Methodology of this work is: to contextualize the subject under analysis in a historical framework based on Political Communication and Sociology; especially that that has analytical and evaluative contents about the connected society, citizen mobilization, empowerment processes and digital citizenship.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### **4.1. Theoretical reflections on media democracy**

During the first years of the 21st century, our societies experienced an unprecedented turning point in recent history: the transition from the television universe to the universe of the Internet, the transition from Tele-democracy to Cyber-democracy. In this new society that is being formed, traditional political actors are falling behind, and web surfers are testing new behaviors, without a road map, but with imagination and yearning for their voices to be heard.

In 1996, Castells wrote that a technological revolution –which transforms information technologies–, was modifying the bases of society at an accelerated

pace. Ten years later, he added that bureaucracy would try to use the Internet as a bulletin board for one-way communication; and some disaffected individuals would use the Internet to mock politicians, to appeal for the insurgent expressions of alternative political values, and an active citizenry could find on the Internet the means to avoid the filters of the mass media, and political parties could create networks with which they would affirm their collective autonomy (Castells, 2013).

Castells spoke of the “Network Society”, which he defines as that whose social structure is made up of networks activated by digital communication and information technologies based on micro-electricity. Digital networks are global due to their ability to reconfigure themselves according to the instructions of programmers, transcending the territorial and institutional limits through interconnected computer networks.

The Network Society entails changes in the public space where society deliberates and builds its perceptions and decisions. This space, which was built around the democratic nation State at a moment in which the center of the world was the State, has been eroded in its capacity for representation by globalization, by the construction of identities in which people acknowledge themselves and that do not necessarily coincide with their citizenship but with their religious or ethnic, local or territorial, gender or personal identity. (Ibid)

Therefore, we have different theoretical efforts from academics who, with greater or lesser success, have been shaping this new political reality defined by the centrality on the Media: Mediocracy (Phillips, 1975), Video politics (Sartori, 1992), Democracy of Public Opinion (Minc, 1995), and Media Principality (Colomé, 2001). (Robinson, 1976)

#### **4.2. The viral phenomenon of the independent candidates**

Credibility crisis of political parties: General disenchantment with Politics and the 2014 Electoral Reform, one of the indicators that caused waves of Independent Candidacies, which can be read as the Partial Oxygenation of the Mexican Political System, and that opened a new debate about the processes of Youth empowerment and Digital Citizenship.

That way, we observed that between 2015 and 2016 the number of citizens interested in obtaining an independent candidacy grew by over 50 percent. With the slogan, “Politicians, we your Mexican bosses, are sick and tired!” [ES: “*Políticos, sus patronos los mexicanos estamos hasta la madre*”], 6 independent candidates united, in a video, to request citizen support for the electoral elections of June, 2016 (Guzmán, 2016).

Wrapped in the anti-establishment flag, almost all of them had a questioning speech to participacy and protested against “the same old politicians” to win voters. However, most of them came from the party system itself.

The Independent Candidates won the 2015 Federal Elections in Mexico: Alfaro, Clouthier, Kumamoto, Lemus and 'El Bronco'. However, in states such as Veracruz, Puebla, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua, etc., multiple 'Anti-Bronco' Electoral laws were approved.

### **4.3 Kumamoto, Wiki-Party and the Digital Party**

The turning point for Wiki-Politics occurred in June, 2015, when one of its founders, Pedro Kumamoto from Jalisco, won a seat in the Congress of Jalisco. The key was an austere campaign with the support of hundreds of volunteers who disseminated an electoral program with clear and precise objectives to voters. The seed of the organization was incubated in 2012 after the presidential elections and as the result of the #YoSoy123 [EN: #IAm123] Movement: "One of the claims during those days was that politics was very corrupt and vertical. Wikipolítica [EN: WikiPolitics] is an effort to create a space for political organization in which the greatest amount of people possible can participate", stated Rodrigo Cornejo, member of the organization (Romero, 2018).

Citizen mobilization was initially focused on forming a new political party. Inspired by the idea of a Wiki-Party –in which participation would be held through technologies–, and the models of the Pirate Parties in Germany and Sweden, two groups of young people in Mexico City and Jalisco began the organization process: "People are disenchanted with politics. There is outrage and annoyance towards the political elite, but even so we have worked very hard. That is why we need to meet with those who are outraged and share the desires and opportunities for change" – they stated. Therefore, its organization center lies in its members, the people, and strengthening the idea that public service is a tool for common benefit (Sánchez, 2018).

Later, Kumamoto and his comrades from the Western Institute of Technology and Higher Studies (ITESO), when knowing that the party scheme required excessive financing and clientelism as the foundation to promote a vertical structure, they decided to take a break. And it is that, in fact his political work with community bases reminds us more of the organization of the *caracoles zapatistas* [EN: Rebel Zapatista Autonomous Municipalities], the 15-M *Indignados* Movement or the Occupy Wall Street (Núñez, 2017).

After Kumamoto's victory, the organization grew in Jalisco and hundreds of people approached its founders to decode the keys to its success. Wikipolítica's members agreed that the political situation in the State of Jalisco –political alternation and the reconfiguration of its traditional parties– created the necessary conditions for the development of their proposal. That way, Kumamoto and Wikipolítica have advanced achieving a national impact triumph by reducing public financing for political parties in Jalisco.

The Wikipolítica formula has managed to position itself in 10 Mexican states. In 2018, it collected the necessary signatures to put Kumamoto on the electoral ballot for the Senate; three Candidates for the Chamber of Deputies and 13 Applicants for local congresses in: Jalisco, Mexico City, Yucatán, San Luis Potosí and Nuevo León.

On another note, the National Electoral Institute (INE) provided the accreditation to start the process of constitution of the new Digital Party in Mexico. This initiative will seek to promote a much more participatory and inclusive digital citizenry project. The creation of this political force is promoted by a group of digital media activists led by Ricardo Fernández Audiffred and Amado Avendaño Villafuerte. This organization will seek to open a direct channel for political participation in all the topics of the national agenda: public security, human and social rights, access to healthcare, social security, culture, gender perspective, environment, opportunities for development, and of course, digital rights (*Redacción, 2019*).

It is going to be a party that uses mobile applications, social networks and the Internet to forget about the old structures that work in a face-to-face way with large organograms that make democracy more expensive.

The idea was mainly to create a platform in which people could comment about public issues and link it to political parties so that they could take those opinions into account, but certain that the parties were not going to pay attention to them, Amado Avendaño and Ricardo Fernández decided to set the goal of turning that platform into a political party: The Digital Party (*Zepeda, 2019*).

Beyond the elections, Wikipolítica and the Digital Party are striving to convey that the value of politics does not lie in the electoral processes but in the participation of citizens in their communities for the future: "If we do not obtain the results we would like to get in 2018, they will see us in 2021, in 2024. We are not worried because we are hacking the party system and this is going to take years, it is not going to be won simply with the elections of this year" (*Ibid*).

## **5. CONCLUSIONS / Wiki-Parties, youth empowerment and digital citizenship**

For several years, the possibility of expanding the political system and opening it up so that independent citizens could compete electorally without the endorsement of a party has been discussed. This idea meant advancement in the face of the serious distrust crisis of citizens towards the political parties. Finally, with the electoral reform of 2014, this figure was approved. It was first implemented in 2015 and its first results showed that the political openness was working. Years later they allowed the emergence of the Wiki Parties or Digital Parties. Therefore, the following conclusions were drawn:

With 100% of counted votes, the INE confirmed a difference of 31 points for AMLO compared to the second place held by Ricardo Anaya. In total, 56 million 512

thousand 557 Mexicans voted. By the end of the district counting of the 2018 elections votes, the victory of the presidential candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador was confirmed. According to the final figures presented by the INE, the Candidate of the Political Coalition “*Juntos Haremos Historia*” [EN: Together We Will Make History], obtained a total of 30 million 113 thousand 483 votes, equivalent to 53.19% (Reveles, 2018).

July 1 will be remembered as a “hard day” for the independent candidates (citizens): out of the 411 mayoral candidates, only 20 won. And out of the 37 candidates for Federal deputies under the same principle, none of them was victorious. The other two big defeats were for Pedro Kumamoto and Manuel Clouthier, who together with Raúl González and Pablo Salazar did not make it to the Senate (García, 2018).

In 2018, the Independent Candidacies open to Citizen Participation draw up two routes of action: 1) The one followed by the Professional Politicians, external to the citizens, who turned out to be a fraud because they forged signatures; and 2) The Novel Youth Participation through the Wiki Party and the incipient emergence of the Digital Party, still with local but significant character.

Wikipolítica was consolidated and the Digital Party emerged: both youth movements made digital platforms their main tools to seek to generate change through the appeal for social mobilization. That way, this Liquid Generation (Bauman) will face participacy in a battle that seems to be slow and prolonged.

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