Parliamentary Power to the People: Analyzing Online and Offline Strategies in Latin America

With their ability to shape a nation's economic, social, and political future, national parliaments wield an incredible amount of power and influence over the citizens they represent. Yet in Latin America, public trust in the deliberative branch of government is alarmingly low. Part of the solution is political reform, but if parliaments are to become more trustworthy and effective, citizens also need to proactively engage representatives by means of greater participation and monitoring. Through the strategic use of internet technologies, newly formed parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) are forging spaces and tactics to bring citizens and governments together.

Latin America Program & Information Program

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About the Latin America and Information Programs

The issues of parliamentary monitoring and the use of informatics to increase legislative transparency are priorities for the Open Society Foundations' Latin America and Information programs. The Latin America Program has supported the work of traditional parliamentary monitoring organizations through its relationship with several members of the Latin America Network for Legislative Transparency. The Information Program has become increasingly engaged in the use of informatics to increase legislative transparency through its relationship with Vota Inteligente in Chile, Poder Ciudadano in Argentina, MySociety in the UK, and Sejmometr in Poland. The programs commissioned this analysis by information scholar Greg Michener to gauge the effectiveness and relevance of parliamentary monitoring organizations and the role they play in increasing accountability and strengthening democratic governance

About the Author

Greg Michener, a Canadian citizen and a resident of Brazil, is a professor at the IBMEC in Belo Horizonte, a consultant, translator, and editor. He completed an M.A. in Latin American Studies and a Ph.D. in Comparative Politics and International Relations at the University of Texas at Austin, after earning his B.A. at McGill University in Montreal. A specialist in the politics of transparency, freedom of information, and open government, he is currently writing a book on freedom of information in Latin America for Cambridge University Press.

Parliamentary Power to the People:

Analyzing Online and Offline Strategies in Latin America

In a democracy, no other single arena shapes the social, economic, and political life of a country as powerfully as its parliament. Ironically, it is also true that few other arenas frustrate citizens more. Parliamentary process can be unsightly, bewildering and tedious, and as the only self-regulating branch of government, parliaments tend to lag behind in standards-based commitments, including transparency.

In Latin America, the focus of this report, parliaments also face the challenge of disrepute. Only 45 percent of Latin Americans trust congress, and of twelve institutions evaluated by the Americas Barometer,[1] only political parties garner greater distrust. These numbers not only enjoin us to hold our parliaments to account, but also to promote greater citizen awareness, education, engagement, and interaction with representatives.

Our ability to make good on these intentions has never been more promising. Within the last half decade, parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) have begun to deploy the growing power of informatics, increasing their potential reach and impact.

This Report

This report asks how PMOs can leverage online and offline strategies to make legislative information of greater social and political utility and increase the measurable impact of PMOs. The report focuses on Latin America, but provides inferences that travel across regions. It highlights context-based constraints and identifies PMO strategies that help foster engagement, participation, learning, and political accountability. The study employs a case-study methodology, and includes quantitative indicators, more than 30 semi-structured interviews, as well as academic and archival research. The research for this study was carried out between June and September 2011, with an update in January 2012.

The paper builds on a seminal [report](#)[2] authored by Andrew Mandelbaum and published in 2011 by the National Democratic Institute and the World Bank. Yet whereas the Mandelbaum Report sought to catalogue PMOs, the current document focuses on Latin America's political context and three web-based legislative platforms within the region: Brazil's Vote na Web (Vote on the Web), Chile's Vota Inteligente (Intelligent Vote) and Colombia's Congreso Visible (Visible Congress).

The study finds that the design and activities of these three organizations approximate three non-exclusive models of PMO projection: an Engagement Model, a Social Accountability Model, and a Research Model, respectively. While the first model focuses on engaging

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[1] The 2010 AmericasBarometer by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP), www.LapopSurveys.org.

[2] Andrew G Mandelbaum, Forthcoming: *Strengthening Parliamentary Accountability, Citizen Engagement and Access to Information: A Global Survey of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations* (Washington: National Democratic Institute and the World Bank Institute, 2011).

citizens with the parliamentary process, a Social Accountability Model uses and re-uses[3] parliamentary information as a means of keeping officials accountable. The Research Model, by contrast, focuses on providing in-depth information on parliamentary activity while maintaining a relatively agnostic approach toward the political process. While all three models are perfectly legitimate and represent only rough approximations, each approach emphasizes different online and offline strategies.

This study is divided into three parts. Part One examines a few exogenous challenges of PMOs, including hurdles to greater legislative transparency, representation, and accountability. Part Two introduces the case study subjects chosen[4] for this analysis. General national contexts are examined, as well as internet traffic, social media strategies, marketing, outreach, and the transparency and accountability ecosystem. Part Three examines the place of PMOs within their respective "legislative info ecosystems," the models they reflect, directions to be considered, and potential innovations. After concluding, the Appendix provides a list of recommended PMO strategies and tools.

The report sets out three general recommendations:

1. First, the most basic hurdle for effective PMOs is still political and logistical: the challenge of obtaining complete and timely legislative information and expeditiously presenting it to the public in easy-to-use formats. PMOs should have the same access to legislative information as parliamentary administrators. In short, pressure needs to be put on governments to:

- Put all legislative activity online and improve the accessibility of websites.
- Consistently engage in public, nominal votes that are recorded at the committee and plenary levels.
- Make voting records, agendas, transcripts, bills, campaign finance contributions, and all parliamentary information highly accessible in one place, in open formats.

> **KEEPING UP WITH CONGRESS: AN OVERWHELMING TASK**
>
> *From 2000 to 2010, Brazil's congress approved an average of 656 laws a year, or 55 per month. Approximately 15 percent of this legislative output originated in congress (deputies and senators), and 85 percent from the executive branch. The 513 deputies in the lower house introduced over 700 initiatives per year, of which only about 14 percent became law. If the government's legislative projects are added to those of the lower house, there are over 100 legislative projects being presented per month. Assuming that the average bill is approximately 3000 words, 100 initiatives means approximately 1200 pages of legislative production per month. On top of legislation, there are 41 different committees to keep track of in the lower house alone, 20 permanent committees, 15 special committees, 4 external committees and 2 mixed committees. Assuming each committee meets an average of once a week, that's over 80 meetings per month. There is also the question of voting records for all 513 deputies, keeping track of daily and weekly legislative schedules, legislation passed and printed in the official gazette, individual, party, and government statements, and reviews of important policy debates.*

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[3] The term "re-use" is commonly used to invoke the use of digital primary data in other applications. For example, data on parliamentary voting can be re-used in many ways, such as being mapped to show voting patterns by district.

[4] The cases were chosen by the Open Society Foundations.

As a result of obstacles to greater transparency and the laborious work of PMO administrators in summarizing legislative production, research suggests that none of the PMOs examined in this study were able to stay fully up-to-date on the work of the legislature. New approaches ought to be devised to ensure timeliness, because timeliness means relevance and allows advocates to act preventively and proactively.

2. Second, if PMOs are to become highly relevant, they need to carefully articulate their strategic directions. Some PMOs risk spreading resources too thin. Others focus on participation, but lack the forward or backwards linkages with other organizations, political leaders, academics, media, or policy advocates that might lend depth to PMO participation. Others appear to let interest in technology heavily influence their direction, rather than putting technology at the disposal of strategy. In short, strategy means defining the scope of a project and the choice of tools. Strategy means focusing above all on relevance and measurable impact.

3. Third, PMOs need to better integrate themselves into the transparency and accountability ecosystems of their respective countries. Numerous actors use legislative information: virtually all issue-based NGOs, academics from multiple disciplines, the media, citizens, and businesses, among others. PMOs should serve as a major node within the advocacy community: partnerships and collaborations should radiate out from PMOs. There are relatively easy ways to accomplish this goal, such as automatically sending policy alerts to relevant organizations and inviting them to sign-in, provide a link, identify themselves as supporters or opponents of legislation, or write a short report, blog post, or comment. The limited outreach of PMOs may be more a reflection of scarce resources than indisposition—PMOs spend most of their time collecting data and documenting legislative activity. But it may also reflect that PMOs are privileging online strategies at the cost of offline impact.

All three parts of the report shed light on these critical issues.

I. THE CHALLENGES OF LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION PLATFORMS AROUND THE WORLD AND IN LATIN AMERICA

What factors stand in the way of PMO effectiveness? Mandelbaum points to three obstacles: funding, parliamentary resistance, and, relatedly, access to information. The following sections discuss the last two of these issues, which are of greatest relevance to the current study.

Access to Information and Transparency as Priorities

Dartmouth University Professor John Carey has studied Latin America's legislatures for more than a decade.[5] His observations are unequivocal: "Latin American legislatures generally

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[5] John Carey, *Legislative Voting and Accountability* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

record very few votes,"[6] he writes, "…even where electronic systems are in place in Latin American legislatures, their use is not a given."[7] Carey's students are currently gathering data on visible voting in the region, but Carey estimates that only about five or so of the region's countries have high numbers of visible votes. Brazil and Chile are within those five, but Colombia is not. Carey's insistence upon "visible votes"—recorded public nominal votes—continues to gather adherents. But there is still a long way to go.

Greater legislative transparency not only improves the efficiency and performance of PMOs, it also benefits the quality of democratic decision-making. In September 2011 Carey presented experimental research into the effects of legislative transparency.[8] Preliminary results suggest that transparency in the legislative process increases legislators' incentives to act in the public interest, fosters universalism in the provision of public goods, and diminishes costs associated with the legislative process, such as heavy patronage payoffs in return for votes.

Among the variegated interests of PMOs, greater transparency in parliament is an important common denominator, a benefit both to the work of PMOs and the public. Efforts to advance transparency reforms in congress also target the disclosure of administrative and travel expenses, campaign finance contributions, visitor logs, and the names, positions, and salaries of staffers, among other information.

In recent years, political scientists have also begun to study informal legislative processes;[9] processes unguided by regulation, such as, for example, the selection of committee chairs in the Argentine Chamber of Deputies. These unrecorded customs have important effects on policy; invisible procedures may delay the treatment of certain bills, leaving policy advocates perplexed.

The need for greater education among policy advocates is acute. María Baron, the director of the Latin American Network for Transparency, claims that "civil society loses a lot of time going to congress."[10] "A lot of NGOs go to congress because they believe their initiatives will move forward legislatively, but they don't know how legislative procedure works." The author's experience supports these assertions. While performing research on an ill-fated freedom of information (FOI) law in Argentina, it became clear that advocates knew little about parliamentary scheduling protocol. Consequently, many could not explain why the FOI bill rarely appeared on the legislative agenda.

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[6] Carey, *Legislative Voting and Accountability*, page 55.
[7] Ibid., page 64.
[8] John M Carey, "Transparency and Legislative Behavior," Paper Presented at the American Political Science Association, Seattle, 2011.
[9] See, for example, Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America* (John Hopkins University Press, 2006), or, Eduardo Alemán, "Policy Gatekeepers in Latin American Legislatures," *Latin American Politics & Society* 48, no. 3 (2006): 125-155.
[10] Personal interview, August 8, 2011.

Different Political Systems, Different PMOs

Although an interest in transparency stands out as a common denominator, PMOs carry out a surprisingly wide variety of missions to serve distinct political contexts and institutional configurations. This section focuses on how these contexts and configurations affect the approaches of PMOs.

The Power of the President Relative to Congress

Whereas presidential initiatives in Mexico account for about 20 percent of all legislation passed, in Brazil the president introduces about 80 percent of all enacted bills, and in Chile and Colombia the numbers are approximately 70 and 65 percent, respectively.[11] The relative dominance of presidents in the legislative process should have a marked effect on PMO strategies.[12] Where dominance is high, advocates might push for legislative reform and encourage a more proactive role for the parliament.[13] At the same time, however, it may be necessary for PMOs to illuminate policy formulation within the executive branch. This does not mean ignoring congress; advocates need to safeguard or tweak legislation as it travels through the legislative process.

Electoral and Voting Systems and the Constituent-Legislator Connection

Another critical question is the type of electoral and voting systems in place.[14] A critical difference between Latin American and U.S. political systems stands out above all others: the constituent-legislator connection. In the United States, lower house districts are represented by only one politician, which makes it easier for constituents to point the finger when infrastructure begins to crumble or votes have been cast against a favored policy of national repercussion, such as, for example, social insurance. Politicians have incentives to please constituents. With few exceptions, Latin America's combination of presidentialism and multi-member districts (districts each represented by multiple legislators) renders the constituent-legislator relationship and consequently, the accountability equation, much less clear-cut.

Take, for example, the state of São Paulo in Brazil. By the estimation of Brazil's system of proportional representation, São Paulo is apportioned 70 deputies in the National Congress,

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[11] Estimates of approval rates change from year to year. These estimates came from different academic and professional sources. See, for example, Argelina Cheibub Figueiredo, Denise Lopes Salles, and Marcelo Martins Vieira, "Political and Institutional Determinants of the Executive's Legislative Success in Latin America," *Brazilian Political Science Review* 3, no. 2 (2009): 155-171.

[12] Another way of looking at the relative power of parliaments *vis à vis* presidents is to examine the Parliamentary Powers Index, developed by M. Steven Fish and Matthew Kroenig. On the index, Latin America averages 0.54, whereas most parliamentary systems in Europe and Canada average over 0.70. For more information see, Steven M. Fish, "Stronger Legislatures, Stronger Democracies," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 1 (2006): 5-20.

[13] I gratefully acknowledge Andrew Mandelbaum's help in rethinking this section.

[14] Many online resources explain electoral system, including Georgetown University (http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/kingch/Electoral_Systems.htm). Wikipedia also does a good job.

elected by the state's eligible voters.[15] With so many legislators in one district (i.e., the state), the legislator-constituent connection may not be as clear-cut as in systems such as the one in the United States.

The complexity of this dynamic is, admittedly, larger than the space available for discussion. But it is important to recognize that weaker links between legislators and constituents call for refined PMO strategies. PMOs might encourage citizens to evaluate the performance of legislators in terms of public goods—universal social policies. And a focus on inserting citizens into advocacy-based interest groups may be more effective than encouraging citizens to contact representatives individually.

Dr. Cristiano Ferri, a political scientist who has worked as an advisor in Brazil's lower house for more than 18 years is the co-creator of the Chamber's e-democracy platform. Ferri claims that representatives read less than 10 percent of emails. "The emphasis," he says, "is on interest groups and lobbies."[16] Journalists embedded in congress explain that voting often follows the preferences of different interest-groups, as opposed to parties.[17]

An Example from Brazil

A striking example is the "Forest Code" legislation introduced by Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff to the lower house in 2011. A leading pollster surveyed 1,268 citizens across Brazil and found high public approval for harsh measures against illegal forestry practices incorporated into the president's bill. An overwhelming 98 percent of respondents supported the president's measures and rejected a proposed amendment in the lower house to grant amnesty for law-breakers.[18]

Despite this unquestionable support for forest protection, the lower house drastically weakened the president's bill, softening punishments and supporting an amnesty for previous infractions. The clout of organized agribusiness and big construction[19] have thus far emerged as the decisive shapers of legislation.

The example highlights the disjuncture between public opinion and representatives, indicative of a tenuous legislator-constituent connection. Other institutional conditions frustrate the situation. Brazil still lacks comprehensive lobbying regulation,[20] which puts well-

[15] For a good examination of this relationship, see for example, Barry Ames, "Electoral Rules, Constituency Pressures, and Pork Barrel: Bases of Voting in the Brazilian Congress," *The Journal of Politics* 57, no. 2 (May 1995): 324-343.
[16] Personal interview, August 18, 2011.
[17] Personal interview with Denise Madueno, congressional correspondent for the *Estado de São Paulo*, August 10, 2011.
[18] See, "Jungle Politics," *Brazil in Focus*, June 13, 2011. Available at: http://brazilinfocus.com/samba/green-zone/237-jungle-politics.html. The bill is currently in the Senate.
[19] Builders of Brazil's 61 planned hydro electric dams (planned until 2019) have a vested interest in the forest code. For more information and links to an article on these dams, see the blog *Observing Brazil*: http://observingbrazil.com/2011/01/10/61-hydro-electric-dams-threaten-amazon-forests/
[20] The Federal Comptroller General has elaborated a law, which is now being studied by the Chief of Staff's Office (Casa Civil).

resourced lobbyists at a clear advantage. Majority coalitions in congress can also be undisciplined, and in this case they voted against the president's stated objectives.

Might the vigorous efforts of an advocacy-oriented PMO have changed the outcome? At the very least, a PMO might have served as an aggregating mechanism, driving interest groups and citizens to support the conservationist coalition, SOS Florestas. Vote monitoring may have also facilitated shaming strategies. But it is difficult to say how much a PMO would have been able to achieve. No easy solutions will resolve parliamentary shortcomings in Latin America or elsewhere. But PMOs can play decisive roles in supporting reform and educating the public.

Presidential dominance and the constituent-legislator connection represent only a few of numerous regionalities associated with Latin America's political systems. Other questions of import have to do with lobbying, campaign finance regulation, rules governing parties (new entrants, primaries, party-switching), and voting rules (open or closed list), among others. PMOs would be well advised to integrate political scientists as team members or partners.

II. INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES

General Context

A country's level of development invariably influences the effectiveness of its parliaments. All three countries analyzed in this report fall into the second-highest category on the United Nations' Human Development Index. Internal evaluations carried out by the U.K. PMO, MySociety,[21] suggest that development indicators such as wealth and education greatly influence interest in legislative activity. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate some basic data that might reflect on the likelihood that citizens will a) take an interest in legislative information, and, b) use the internet.

Table 1

RELEVANT NATIONAL INDICATORS	Population (Millions)	Internet Penetration (% population)	Mandatory Voting	Turnout last election (%)	Trust in the legislature %	Satisfaction with (%) democracy
Brazil	203.4	37.4	√	82	~40	30
Chile	16.9	50.4	√	88	~50	36
Colombia	44.7	54.8		44	~50	32
Source:	*World Bank*	*Internet World Stats*	*Wikipedia*	*Wikipedia*	*Americas Barometer*	*Latinobaró-metro (2007)*

[21] See http://www.mysociety.org/2011/06/15/trying-to-practice-what-we-preach-mysociety-evaluation-reports-published/

Table 2

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS	GDP per Capita (2008)	Poverty: % surviving on less than $1.25 ppp / day	Spending on Education (% of GDP)	Adult illiteracy (%)	Average years in school	Human Development Index rank
Brazil	$ 10,847	5.21	5.2	10	7.2	73
Chile	$ 14,780	<2	3.4	3.1	9.7	45
Colombia	$ 8,959	16.01	3.9	7.3	7.4	79

Internet penetration in Colombia and Chile hovers around 50 percent, and is significantly lower in Brazil at 37.4 percent. It is worth noting, however, that the Brazilian Congress just recently approved a forthcoming National Broadband Program and tax incentives that may rapidly increase access to the internet. In absolute numbers, Brazil has over 70 million users, which represents more than a third of total internet users across Latin America.[22]

Across the region, internet access is set to climb because of increasing incomes and the trend toward smartphones and the mobile web. Currently, the mobile web is growing eight times faster than the conventional web around the world.[23] PMOs ought to start catering to these platforms, focusing on bite-sized summaries of legislative work and graphics on politicians, parties, and performance that arouse interest and are easily shared.

Political context

With few exceptions, Latin Americans have low trust in the political process and are ambivalent about the functioning of democracy.[24] Institutionally, compulsory voting in Brazil and Chile differentiates these two countries from Colombia, where voting is voluntary. Political scientist Arend Lipjhardt argues that compulsory voting may increase interest and participation in politics, which may suggest proportionally higher numbers of citizens interested in the work of PMOs in Brazil and Chile.[25]

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[22] The total number of internet users is approximately 200 million, according to a report released by Amparo (http://www.proyectoamparo.net/en), and citing numbers from the Latin American and Caribbean Internet Addresses Registry (LACNIC)

[23] Interview with former Google Director of Retail Operation, Chris O'Neil, and now president of Google Canada. See, "A Google Ontarian Returns Home." *The Globe and Mail*, August 29, 2011.

[24] According to the 2006 Latinobarómetro, which measured sentiments in 18 countries across the region, 38 percent of Latin Americans were satisfied with democracy. To the statement, "Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government," 52 percent responded in the affirmative. See, http://www.latinobarometro.org/.

[25] Arend Lijphart, "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma," *The American Political Science Review* 91, no. 1 (1997): 8-11.

Table 3

PARLIAMENTS & LEGISLATORS	Location	Lower House Members	Upper House Members	Districts Lower / Upper Houses
Brazil	Brasília	513 / 4 years	81 / 8 years	26 / 26
Chile	Valparaíso	120 / 4 years	38 / 8 years	60 / 19
Colombia	Bogotá	166 / 4 years	102 / 4 years	32* / 1

* five special representatives from minority communities also have seats.

Yet while Brazil and Chile share the compulsory vote, the Brazilian and Colombian political systems have generally more in common. Their electoral systems are based on proportional representation and open-list voting[26]—where citizens can vote for a range of candidates from different parties. Brazil and Colombia are both multi-party systems, though Brazil's is much more extreme, with 23 parties versus Colombia's 15. By contrast, Chile possesses an unusual binomial electoral system. What this means in simple terms is that the country tends to produce relatively equal vote distributions among two large electoral coalitions. This "status quo" system is expected to be reformed within the next few years. Basic figures on each country's parliament are charted in Table 3.

Congressional Websites

The websites for the lower house of congress are pictured below. As discussed in Part Three, interviews suggest that Brazil and Chile's congressional websites are generally perceived as excellent. The website of Colombia's lower house does not have the same reputation for excellence. One legal consultant[27] simply commented, "information is not easy to obtain on the website." The 1.0 design of the site suggests a lack of investment. Information seekers claim the Senate website is much more complete and functional. Part of website for the lower house in each country is depicted below.

Brazilian Chamber of Deputies   *Chilean Chamber of Deputies*   *Colombian Chamber of Representatives*

[26] In Brazil, voting for senators is a party vote (closed-list). Colombia's senators compete in a single district.
[27] Personal interview with Lorenzo Villegas Carrasquilla, 18 August, 2011.

Case Study Descriptions

Do the websites of the three PMOs under examination offer substitutes for official parliamentary websites or are they focused on different objectives? The following sections give descriptions of each website, and lay out metrics on internet traffic as well as Google search results and social media.

Brazil's Vote na Web   *Chile's Vota Inteligente*   *Colombia's Congreso Visible*

Vote na Web, Brazil

Founded in January 2009 by the company WebCitizen, Vote na Web is dedicated to civic engagement. Its functional purpose is to allow registered users to vote for or against legislation mostly proposed by deputies and senators. The site is divided into four tabs: the first displays relatively recent projects, the second is an archive of legislative projects, the third is a database of legislators accompanied by short biographies, and the fourth is the user's profile. In this last page, the platform matches voting patterns with candidates, parties, and other website users.

The principal draw of the website is participation through voting and comments, and simplified explanations of legislation. Projects can be sorted by various tags, including by state, party, origin, and most-voted. A map of Brazil lights up with green or red states in accordance with votes cast in those states. If legislation is approved or rejected in congress, user voting results and maps of voting patterns can be compared with those of legislators.

Projects have tracking options, as well as news feeds on the general issue area (e.g., the environment), and space for comments. The project, voting results, or a letter can be sent to a friend, a politician, or the bill can be posted on Twitter, Facebook, or embedded on a website.

Although there were 18,000 registered users as of October 2011, most projects appear to receive fewer than 150 votes. Some, however, gain considerable attention. Encountered at random, one legislative project on the "permissibility of hunting animals when they pose threats to people" (PLC 7136 / 2010) received 1075 votes from users, and 78 comments were made over two months. The environmental theme appeared to touch a nerve with a particular interest group, which voted 71 percent in favor of the law. Congress ultimately rejected the bill. This example might suggest that Vote na Web can provide a venue for the expression of minority interest groups.

Vota Inteligente, Chile

Vota Inteligente's new website is currently in the midst of development, thus this description provides a very general sketch of the two platforms.

Vota Inteligente is a project of the Ciudadano Inteligente Foundation, and was launched during the Chilean presidential election of 2009-2010. The current website's stated mission consists of informing the public, keeping politicians accountable, and fomenting participation, "by taking advantage of new technologies"—a primary focus of Ciudadano Inteligente. As it stands, this website is relatively standard PMO fare, with sections to educate the public, to monitor legislation, committees, and voting, and to examine the profiles of legislators, parties, and the president.

The newer site will be considerably more ambitious. In addition to a more nuanced search function, the site will include interactive features, such as the ability to request attendance in parliament, to receive email "alarms" and comment on bills, and to request "urgency" on a bill. Because the Chilean president has the power to assign three types of urgency to a bill, popular support for urgent treatment can act as an important signal for lawmakers.

It is critical to note that, unlike Vote na Web and Congreso Visible, Vota Inteligente is only one of Ciudadano Inteligente's many web-based platforms. Other politically-focused platforms include an innovative website to monitor presidential promises, a platform to scrutinize parliamentarians' potential legislative-personal conflicts of interest (The "Interest Inspector"[28]), and several current-issue websites that examine actual policy debates, such as correspondence between student demands for education reform and official positions. Vota Inteligente in many ways serves as a launch pad for other initiatives, providing the raw data to be re-used in creating innovative applications.

Social media is integrated into all of Ciudadano Inteligente's sites; several even use Facebook comment plug-ins and exhibit long, interactive streams of comments. Notably, the current website provides links to other related Chilean NGOs, the country's National Library of Congress, and contact information for legislators.

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[28] Inspector de Intereses http://www.inspectordeintereses.cl/

Congreso Visible, Colombia

Inaugurated in 1998 by the Universidad de los Andes, Congreso Visible is by far the most well-established and broad-reaching of the three PMOs. The website is extensive and as of this writing had been newly updated. The website's core sections are organized by political units of analysis: a) legislators, b) parties, c) commissions, and d) legislative activity. A fifth section entitled "Ágora "(or public place of assembly) is dedicated to current events and debates, and includes special reports and blogs by politicians and policy advocates. A final section lists "allies," their blogs, what they track on Congreso Visible, contact details, social media subscriptions, and information about the organization.

Clearly centered on the legislative process, Congreso Visible provides voluminous information on the legislative agenda, debates, the origin and trajectory of bills, legislators, parties, and committees. It links these political elements with on-site news and blogs. It also allows users to gain in-depth insight into voting patterns in congress, which can be sorted by multiple parameters.

The website provides ubiquitous opportunities for registered users to comment, track, and vote on proposed legislation, and contact legislators and parties. Visitors can also sign-up for an in-depth quarterly bulletin—the February to May edition is 16 pages long and reflects a marked academic bent. According to Congreso Visible, a good part of their media inquiries have to do with issues covered in the bulletin. Vivian Newman, from the Colombian NGO Dejusticia, saw it as a "valuable" resource.[29] Finally, java-script-type applications allow the user to expand items (e.g., "…read more") throughout the website, avoiding clutter and excessive scrolling.

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[29] Personal communication, August 17, 2011. Newsletters appear to be one of the more consistently successful elements of PMO webpages. In-page analytics for Chile's Vota Inteligente showed that the newsletter sign-up box had the highest number of clicks of any other element on the page. The idea of the push model—bringing users to the page through alerts, tracking features, or newsletters—ought to be further explored.

Traffic

Table 4 provides data on website traffic for two and a half months, from June 1, 2011, until August 15, 2011. There are striking differences among the results.

Table 4

WEBSITE TRAFFIC	Vote na Web	Vota Inteligente	Congreso Visible
Visits per month*	43176	4280	47194
Monthly Visits, per Capita	0.00021	0.00025	0.0011
Monthly Visits, per National Internet Users	0.00057	0.00046	0.0021
Visits per day	1439.2	143	1573
Page Views	242560	20191	258296
Pages per Visit	2.25	1.89	2.19
Bounce Rate	70%	71.01%	72.30%
Average Time on Site	2:17	1:56	2:32
New Visits	69.85%	61.52%	74.23%
* 5-10 percent of all visitors come from outside of the country of origin.			

It is clear from data gleaned from Congreso Visible's annual report that traffic for the two and a half months under examination was very high by historical standards—more than a third higher than the period beginning in April 2010 and ending in May 2011. This observation does not diminish Congreso Visible's strong upward trend in traffic since 2010, especially after it forged a relationship with the newspaper *El Espectador*—to be discussed later on. By contrast, Vota Inteligente's traffic has not shown a significant overall increase, although it did spike during key political moments. No long-term data was available for Vote na Web.

Two indicators correct for variation in population among the three countries, "monthly visits per capita," and "monthly visits per national internet users." Colombia's Congreso Visible receives three to four times as many visits by national internet users than do its peers in Chile and Brazil. Visitors to Chile's Vota Inteligente spend the least amount time on the website, 21 seconds less than Vote na Web's visitors, and more than half a minute less than Congreso Visible's. They also view fewer pages per visit.

This discrepancy might be explained by problems with Vota Inteligente's website, which suffers from script issues, but it probably has more to do with the high quality of the Chilean National Congress and Chilean Library of Congress websites, which serve as excellent resources for parliamentary information. These sites are discussed further on.

Metrics on first time visitors are also revealing. Vota Inteligente has significantly fewer new visitors and thus more return visitors. It appears to have a dedicated following. By contrast, Congreso Visible boast quite a high number of first time visitors. This result may have much to do with its performance on Google searches, as illustrated by Figure 1.
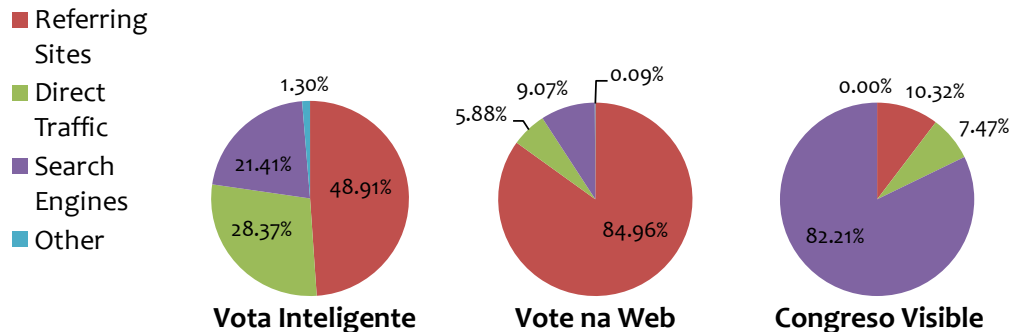
Figure 1: Origin of Internet Traffic

Legend:
- ■ Referring Sites
- ■ Direct Traffic
- ■ Search Engines
- ■ Other

Vota Inteligente:
- 48.91%
- 28.37%
- 21.41%
- 1.30%

Vote na Web:
- 84.96%
- 5.88%
- 9.07%
- 0.09%

Congreso Visible:
- 0.00%
- 10.32%
- 7.47%
- 82.21%

Figure 1 illustrates that more than four-fifths of Congreso Visible's visitors arrive through internet searches, which might explain why it receives so many first-time visitors. This strikes a stark contrast to Vote na Web and Vota Inteligente, where just over a fifth and a tenth of visitors arrive by searches, respectively. MySociety's Theyworkforyou.com, a well-established legislative platform out of the United Kingdom, receives 70 percent of its traffic from searches. Joshua Tauberer, the creator of PopVox and GovTrack,[30] also divulged that most of his visitors arrive through Google searches.[31]

The amount of traffic coming from searches can be misleading, because those familiar with the site in question and who favor Google searches over URL address-entry ought to be included in the category of "direct traffic." MySociety claims that about 10 percent of their search-based traffic arrives at the website in this way.[32]

While the search traffic for Vote na Web and Vota Inteligente has the potential to be much higher, Congreso Visible might do well to bulk-up its network of referrers. It already has good visibility on Wikipedia, but overall numbers are relatively low. Contributing a reference to Wikipedia is an excellent start; the U.K.'s MySociety political websites receive about two percent of their total traffic from Wikipedia.

Vota Inteligente appears well-connected to the social media and NGO ecosystems, as more than four-fifths of all of its traffic comes from referring sites. It seems to either stimulate interest in repeat-users or loyal friends, because its overall traffic has not grown significantly since it went on the air. By contrast, Vote na Web distinguishes itself with the large number of direct visits it receives, meaning that visitors connect to the site by feeding the URL into the address bar. On a survey prepared for Vote na Web by the author, more than half of Vote na Web's users identified themselves as "sporadic" visitors (n=1179 responses).[33] This

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[30] https://www.popvox.com/ and http://www.govtrack.us/
[31] Personal interview, August 2, 2011.
[32] Tobias Escher, *TheyWorkForYou.com: Analysis of users and usage for UK Citizens Online Democracy* (London: MySociety, 2011), http://bit.ly/nOnDTh
[33] The categories were non-exclusive, meaning that people could check more than one descriptor.

deliberateness suggests some degree of loyalty from a significant group of visitors, an observation confirmed by the use of social media later on.

Table 5

GOOGLE KEYWORD SEARCH RESULTS: Rank within the first 100 national results	Vote na Web (google.com.br)	Vota Inteligente (google.cl)	Congreso Visible (google.com.co)
Legislation / Legislação / Legislación	—	—	—
Bill / Projeto de lei / Proyecto de ley	—	—	6
First word of organization's name	—	3	6
vote / voto	6	3	27
Representative / deputado (BZL) / diputado (CL) / representativo (CO)	—	—	52
Lower House / Camara de Deputado / Camara de Diputados / Camara de Representantes	—	—	8
Deputy / Representative: first alphabetically starting after "R"	—	—	3
Senator: first alphabetically starting after "B"	59	—	6

Google Search Results

Table 5 illustrates the results of keyword and name searches using each country's national Google page. The searches were undertaken in the appropriate language and signed-out of Google accounts to control for Google's personalization biases. The results are decidedly mixed, with Congreso Visible performing relatively well, and significant room for search engine optimization (SEO) improvement in the two much newer platforms.

None of the three sites invest in search engine optimization, according to interviews and available data; nor did any of the three sites report that they had taken advantage of Google grants for non-profits. Google adwords donated by a Google grant brought in about 2 percent of traffic for MySociety websites, according to Tobias Escher.

Social Media

Tables 6 and 7 provide metrics on three social media brands: Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube. The samples collected are relatively small and, admittedly, quantitative results say nothing about the impact or quality of posts. Although Vote na Web has far more Youtube videos, for example, almost all of these videos consist of interviews or presentations by the founders of the flagship company, Web Citizen.

Table 6

TWITTER, TWEETS, AND TWITALYZE ANALYTICS*	Vote Na Web	Vota Inteligente	Congresso Visible
Tweets	2381	3563	3285
Following	1441	7610	2305
Followers	2014	9821	3924
Lists	153	253	230
Impact (Twitalyze)	54.2%	97.3%	75.4%
Clout (Twitalyze)	54.3%	96.2%	67.4%
Influence (Twitalyze)	59.7%	98.1%	76.2%
Effective Reach (Twitalyze)	52.3%	98.1%	74.1%
Tweets on Monday August 22	0	10	8
Tweets on Friday August 12, 2011	3	29	4
Tweets on Thursday, August 4, 2011	0	13	1
Tweets on Wednesday, July 27, 2011	0	11	13
Tweets on Tuesday, July 19, 2011	7	7	17

*Tweets, following, followers, lists collected on August 9, 2011. All figures for Twitalyze collected on August 24, 2011, and represent percentile of total Twitter users; to learn more about Twitalyze measures, visit http://www.twitalyzer.com/metrics.asp?u=opensociety; one month sample of tweets taken on staggered days of the week. Please see the appendix for the definition of Twitalyze metrics.

Table 7

YOUTUBE AND FACEBOOK USE*	Vote na Web	Vota Inteligente	Congreso Visible
YouTube Videos Uploaded	30	7	5
YouTube Subscribers	10	8	25
Facebook Page	√	√	√ Group
Facebook	1684 Likes	2838 Likes	1462 Members
Facebook Comments in last 30 posts	23	4	10

*Data collected August 24, 2011.

Vote na Web does, however, elicit a significant number of comments on Facebook from a small community of dedicated followers. Its strategy of describing a legislative project and then asking users if they are in favor or against it appears to encourage engagement (see next paragraph).

Votenaweb
Projeto de lei conhecido como "Lei Seca do Cigarro" proibirá o motorista de fumar enquanto dirige. Você é contra ou a favor? http://bit.ly/ouK56T

"Legislative project known as "the Dry Cigarette Law" will prohibit drivers from smoking when drinking. Are you against or in favor? http://bit.ly/ouK56T"

On a survey of 1179 visitors, about a quarter of Vote na Web's users respond that they come to the site because of a friend.

Vota Inteligente is by far the most active of the three PMOs on Twitter, and its Twitalyze scores are impressive (refer to Appendix 2). But this performance is somewhat deceptive—@votainteligente is the Twitter address used for all of Ciudadano Inteligente's projects. These include the very popular "Acceso Inteligente" and several other embryonic projects. Nonetheless, a strategy of aggregating all of Ciudadano Inteligente's activities in one Twitter account may payoff in terms of name and referral diffusion. It may partly account for why Vota Inteligente has so much referred traffic.

Vota Inteligente (or, Ciudadano Inteligente) also tends to use social media in a more holistic manner than the other two PMOs: it sends personal messages to users over Twitter, comments on political activities in Chile, references articles and other NGOs, and re-tweets prodigiously while pushing its own content forward. In short, Vota Inteligente seems to be locked into the country's transparency and accountability ecosystem, rather than simply pushing product.

Marketing and Promotion

Marketing is a secondary priority for all three PMOs examined. Vote na Web was the only one of the three websites to have engaged in some type of formal marketing exercise. It hired a public relations firm to increase exposure during its first six months of operation. This strategy helped build the website's media exposure and public profile, according to administrator Daniele Amaral. Amaral also works with bloggers to help disseminate Vote na Web's "featured laws of the week."

Vota Inteligente attempts to take advantage of sensational political events to score what Team Manager Juan José Soto refers to as "quick wins." Quick wins take shape by creating a website to address a timely political issue or policy. During recent protests for education reform, for instance, Vota Inteligente developed a website called Globo Ciudadano (Citizen's Balloon). Its main purpose was to provide a forum for discussion and an instructional diagram for how to turn your video-enabled cell phone or camera into a streaming sky-camera, suspended by a balloon to capture protests on video. The Globo Ciudadano project illustrates a youthful approach to social accountability and a great example of brand dissemination.

Leveraging disruptive political events such as scandals and elections is a winning strategy to increase traffic and potential impact. The experience of the U.K.'s Theyworkforyou.com makes this clear. Average traffic on the site is 200,000 to 300,000 visitors per month, but during the 2010 general election, the website received 230,000 visitors in just one week. In this case, a "quick win" application helped drive traffic: a popular election quiz available on the site posted 100,000 visits before voters went to the polls.

Congreso Visible achieved an impressive promotional advance by convincing the country's second largest newspaper, *El Espectador,* to incorporate a widget on its website in late 2010.

When readers come across the names of legislators in *El Espectador*,[34] they can mouse-over a hyperlink (with a '+' sign beside it) to produce a small window with a picture of the legislator, a brief summary of affiliation, legislative activity, and percentage of votes cast in-line with his or her party. The picture to the left is a screen shot from Congreso Visible's 2011 Annual Report.[35] Users can also click on "SEE MORE" (VER MAS) and will link directly to Congreso Visible's website.

The widget has markedly increased traffic, according to Congreso Visible Director, Monica Pachón. The day before speaking with Pachón,[36] it had been used 65,000 times. Elections or scandals—when interest in political news tends to be highest—would undoubtedly have a multiplier effect on these numbers.

Congreso Visible also uses outreach to market itself. When the new website rolled-out in 2010, Congreso Visible presented its various features to media outlets and federal legislators. Deputies and legislators were also invited to contribute blogs to the site. This push-and-pull strategy ostensibly helped Congreso Visible gain recognition as an authoritative source for legislative information during the 2010 presidential and congressional elections.

Outreach and Place within the National Accountability and Transparency Ecosystem

As Congreso Visible's actions illustrate, outreach is in-and-of itself a form of promotion and marketing. The outreach activities of the three PMOs in question vary in scope and intensity, and to a large extent reflect the development, mission, and resources of each organization.

But outreach also has to do with the opportunity costs of different strategies. It is clear from interviews with leading PMOs around the world that outreach is still a much under-developed aspect of their repertoire. Surprisingly, most PMOs have yet to approach universities even though students are the most potent disseminators of new norms and ideas. Online strategies might be getting in the way. As Mandelbaum observes, informatics-centered PMOs appear to engage much less with parliament.[37]

Vote na Web performs no outreach and has reportedly few associations with the transparency and accountability community at large. Indeed, Communications Director

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[34] See, for example, http://bit.ly/ovDm4N
[35] Provided to the author. Congreso Visible, Universidad de los Andes, *Congreso Visible: Informe Anual* (Bogotá, August 2011).
[36] Personal interview, July 28, 2011.
[37] Andrew G Mandelbaum, Forthcoming: *Strengthening Parliamentary Accountability, Citizen Engagement and Access to Information: A Global Survey of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations*, p.81.

Mariana Fonseca[38] indicated the intention to establish formal and informal collaborations, although none had been established at the time of this writing. There may be a sound justification for Vote na Web's lack of outreach: it is still part of a private company—Web Citizen—and is currently in the midst of becoming a foundation by the same name.

Although roughly the same vintage as Vote na Web, Vota Inteligente has already found a central position for itself within the country's accountability and transparency ecosystem. Its parent, Ciudadano Inteligente, has an expansive interest in government accountability and transparency and Vota Inteligente staffers are on intimate terms with some of Chile's leading transparency advocates, including Proacceso and Participa. "They're our friends," offered Director Moisés Sanchez of Proacceso, during an interview for this report.

Vota Inteligente is involved in several collaborative efforts. First, it is currently working with the National Library of Congress in order to secure greater commitments to open data and open formats in the legislature. It meets regularly with the Consortium for Transparency, an NGO and research institution-driven advocacy group, as well the Initiative for Parliamentary Transparency, which works with members of congress. The goal here is incorporating transparency reforms into Congress' Internal Regimen (Organic Law).[39] Finally, Vota Inteligente informally teaches journalism students at different universities how to make good use of Ciudadano Inteligente's platforms.

In contrast to the other two PMOs, Congreso Visible is markedly more politics-centric. In an extensive interview, Director Monica Pachón insisted that when she became director one of her foremost priorities was to cultivate a close relationship with legislators. She admits that this decision has had some negative repercussions on Congreso Visible's relationships with non-profits. But she believes adversarial relations with parliament are counter-productive.

Congreso Visible curates events that put academic experts and legislators face-to-face, off the record, in a program referred to as the "Congress-University Convocation."[40] The idea is to permit legislators to ask questions, discuss issues, and seek advice—absent the inhibiting influence of the media.

While Congreso Visible's activities show that it is mainly focused on what political scientists call "elites"—academia, the legislature, and the media—it also reaches out to students, other universities, and reportedly conducts seminars for NGOs on how to use congressional information. As indicated by Congreso Visible's dedicated "allies" webpage, it appears to value external collaboration.

As the preceding pages convey, all three platforms have taken markedly different approaches to social media, marketing, and outreach. Part Three examines whether these approaches have had an effect on where people go for information on the legislature.

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[38] Personal interview, August 10, 2011.
[39] Particularly on Article 5 of Chile's Ley Orgánico del Congreso.
[40] Cátedra Congreso–Universidad.

III. PMOs AND THE ECOSYSTEM FOR LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION

The last part of this report examines the availability of legislative information in order to identify: a) substitute legislative information resources, and, b) the impressions of users with regards to PMOs, if any. It also lays out assessments and non-exclusive recommendations for Vote na Web, Vota Inteligente, and Congreso Visible. Throughout this analysis, three mutually non-exclusive models of PMO projection emerge, as discussed in the report's introduction: the Civic Engagement Model, the Social Accountability Model, and the Research Model.

Legislative Information-Seeking in Brazil

As large as Brazil is, it has relatively few websites dedicated to providing information on the national legislature. This may be a reflection of its official congressional websites, which are widely viewed to be top-notch.

 Julio Vinha, the executive secretary for the National Association of Journalists' Committee on Governmental Relations, tracks projects associated with the press and labor relations. He claims that the official government websites are "very friendly," because they "put projects up in real-time." Vinha also uses Congresso em Foco (Congress is Focus), a website hosted by the website UOL, and owned by the country's most widely circulated newspaper, *Folha de São Paulo*. Acclaimed *Folha de São Paulo* journalist Fernando Rodrigues spoke highly of another source for information on campaign finance, the NGO Contas Abertas (Open Accounts). Rodrigues uses the official website, and notes that its only shortcoming is that it does not provide facsimiles of legislators' receipts. Fabiano Angélico, a journalist and former coordinator for Transparency Brazil, largely echoed the praise bestowed upon the official government websites. Dr. César Zucco, co-creator of the academically-oriented website Congresso Aberto (Open Congress) views the official websites favorably, but set up Congresso Aberto in order to keep updated datasets in more statistician-friendly formats and create visualizations. With Zucco now as a professor at Rutgers University, the platform has largely been left to run itself through automated scripts.

Brazil's **Vote na Web** *and the Engagement Model*

The information on Vote na Web is in many ways a means to the website's end; it allows users to make reasonably well-informed decisions before they cast a vote for one of the platform's legislative projects. Vote na Web's ambition is to serve as a tool for engagement, stimulating interest in legislation and the political process—raising awareness and educating through participation. At this it appears to be making some headway. As of January 2012 it boasted close to 20,000 users, over 450,000 votes, and 13,000 comments. About half of the 1179 responses to an online survey suggest that Vote na Web's audience consists of "curious citizens" (48 percent), as opposed to visitors who self-identify as academics (22 percent), activists (13 percent), from advocacy organizations (3 percent), or media professionals (5 percent), among others.

While the platform does contain information on legislators, parties, and policy, it is clearly not regarded as a tool for professional use. There are good reasons for this. First, Vote na

Web only selectively posts legislation from the executive branch, from where most of Brazil's laws originate. Second, Daniele Amaral admits that the website is not kept current.[41] As of mid-August 2011, the Vote na Web team was still entering legislation dating from June. Amaral also disclosed that administrators sometimes omit legislative projects if they find them excessively complicated.

The informational formats can also be inconsistent. The author searched at length for a freedom of information (FOI) bill currently in the senate, and found that it was difficult to find because its prefix had been assigned letters different from those in parliament (PLCS instead of PLC). In the space reserved for a "brief explanation," the author found over 5000 words—virtually all of the bill's text had been copied and pasted, without paragraph breaks. Finally, the news feed was so general ("rights") that it contained not a single article on FOI.[42]

Combined with the website's poor Google keyword search results, Vote na Web's inconsistent quality as a source of legislative information makes it easy to understand why more than half a dozen professionals admitted to never having used the website as a tool. Of the professionals cited above, Angélico was the only one to have visited Vote na Web. He liked the look and feel of the website, but complained that the concept "runs the risk of oversimplifying things."

This risk depends on the platform's goals. For the time being, the objective is to raise awareness and create engagement, which not only appears to be working, but for which over-simplification may be necessary. According to an online survey of 1179 website visitors, the most cited reason for visits was to check out vote tallies (20 percent), followed closely by a desire to examine legislators' profiles.

The question is whether a PMO offering an abstract exercise with no traceable effect on legislative activities will ramp up enough traffic to render participation deliberative, representative, and meaningful. As it stands, voting is unrepresentative—despite the cool maps—and there are no backward or forward linkages to advocates or the political arena. Vote na Web is an island.

But there is a case to be made for the platform's merits. One registered user of Vote na Web, Gabriel Azevedo,[43] recounted that he found a bill on internet regulation that he would have never otherwise discovered. Because the law provided a short explanation in plain-speak Portuguese, he took the time to read and understand it. He then took action, tweeting it to his friends. If the site finds ways to multiply the number of registered users, it may consider an idea articulated by Participatory Politics Foundation's David Moore:[44] using "intelligent triggers for action"—if a certain threshold number of users vote on a bill, then the PMO will take steps to convey preferences to political centers of power.

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[41] Personal Interview, August 17, 2011.
[42] The news feed was tagged, "rights," and pulled articles with this keyword.
[43] Personal interview, August 29, 2011.
[44] Personal interview, August 5, 2011.

Similar to other countries in the region, Brazil is a young democracy with low educational levels (refer to Table 2) and high internet growth potential. An innovative platform for engagement, participation, and learning may be one of the more fruitful niches for a web-based PMO in Brazil. Moreover, a participation-centered website may help foment issue-based communities whose shared affinities can be productively channeled into interest groups. As discussed in Part One, interest groups tend to be among the most influential actors in Brazil's policy process.

If the objectives of Vote na Web remain focused on engagement, it might consider incorporating innovative ways of helping users learn about congress—including videos, slide shows with voice-over, or games. It might also consider furnishing some basic statistical visualizations. Brazilians ought to know, after all, that the president introduces more than four-fifths of approved legislation. By the same token, educational initiatives might center on how the executive branch engages in policy formulation and interacts with congress.

What is clear is that Brazil's official parliamentary websites are performing in a satisfactory manner. Brazil does need a PMO dedicated to more direct transparency and accountability promotion, but for the time being, it largely goes without.

Legislative Information Seeking in Chile

By contrast to Vote na Web's single-minded focus on engagement, Chile's Vota Inteligente is part of a suite of applications (developed by Ciudadano Inteligente) dedicated to greater accountability in politics. As discussed in Part One, Vota Inteligente's website is soon to be completely re-designed, but its purpose will remain unchanged: to provide a resource for the public and a data source to build new websites, platforms aimed at keeping politicians in check.

It is clear that the official parliamentary websites and the National Library of Congress serve as primary references for information seekers. They are nonetheless playing a willing partner to Vota Inteligente's efforts to promote legislative transparency, open-data, and to secure APIs from parliament.

Moisés Sanchez, the executive director of the NGO Proacceso, says that congressional websites have everything that his organization requires. He only laments the absence of complete financial information. Sanchez supplements the congress' official websites by consulting a special report called *Mercurio Legal*, published by the country's largest media company, El Mercurio. Interviews with other Chilean professionals revealed little new. Claudio Lagos, a journalist and professor, echoed Sanchez's comments about the official websites, as did professor and consultant Tomas Vial Solar, and journalist, Sebastián Rivas. Although all interview subjects were familiar with Vota Inteligente, none had actually used the website as a resource. In sum, extant resources for legislative transparency in Chile appear to be limited but satisfactory.

Vota Inteligente's *Social Accountability Model*

This raises the question of Vota Inteligente's continuing re-invention. Ciudadano Inteligente (the parent foundation) has recently launched Inspector de Intereses, a website exposing potential conflicts of interests in congress. The objective of the website may be viewed as particularly valuable in a country whose small political *milieu* lends itself to conflict of interest dilemmas. It is undoubtedly a seminal new approach to re-using parliamentary information to create greater transparency and accountability, which is at the heart of Ciudadano Inteligente's mission.

Ciudadano Inteligente's current approach suggests a "Social Accountability Model," whereby monitoring and strategy come together in participative initiatives to advance transparency, accountability, and good government. Making information and the political process accessible and transparent is a keystone goal for promoting greater accountability. As Congresso Aberto founder and congressional scholar César Zucco suggested, "everyone who has ever run for public office should be in a publicly accessible database."[45]

The social accountability model is also attractive to many bloggers, journalists, and advocates around the world. Given this interest, it is surprising how few PMOs compile bite-size fodder to be re-used and reported on: datasets, simple quantitative visualizations, or elegantly presented qualitative factoids about politicians, parties, and the legislative process.

A focus on politicians seems to arouse particular interest. Andrew Mandelbaum notes that the "human element" (politicians' profiles) appears to be a favorite pull for visitors. Empirics suggest the same. In-page analytics from the U.K.'s www.Theyworkforyou.com show that 65 percent of visitors go to the House of Commons webpage, and 60 percent then move on to the profiles of ministers of parliament.[46] Yet the focus on politicians also poses a danger: personalized politics tend to be less accountable and predictable than parties. It is important to emphasize the centrality of parties in the political process.

Vota Inteligente understands politics, makes ample use of offline strategies, and balances quantitative information with qualitative qualification. Yet PMOs can easily fall into the trap of over-relying on quantitative indicators that lack context and tend to mislead. Technology makes it easy to quantify, but difficult to qualify. Gauging the efficacy of a legislator by the number of projects presented or how much they speak in debates may say little about quality. Better quantitative indicators might include attendance counts, voting records, monthly administrative expenses, or citations in news articles. But virtually all of this quantitative data needs to be qualified and supplemented by qualitative data, such as project titles or statements. In much the same way as some informatics-based PMOs misguidedly create tools first and strategy second; PMOs ought to understand the pitfalls of a metric before quantifying.

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[45] Personal interview, August 16, 2011.
[46] A Minister of Parliament is equivalent to "representative" or "deputy." Tobias Escher, *TheyWorkForYou.com: Analysis of users and usage for UK Citizens Online Democracy*. The single-member districts of Westminster Parliamentary systems also lend themselves to stronger interest in the constituent-legislator connection.

A social accountability approach needs to influence the legislative process before it happens. As in Brazil, the Chilean executive is exceptionally dominant in legislative terms. But as scholars have noted,[47] there are various informal mechanisms by which congress influences the executive before legislation is sent for approval. Vota Inteligente might consider serving as a civil society go-between for projects on which legislative-executive exchanges are taking place. To this end, it may be a good idea to solicit the input of veteran legislators. Tiago Peixoto, an expert on legislative transparency and consultant to the World Bank Institute, noted[48] that veteran opposition legislators, in particular, possess deep insights into procedural strategy and bargaining. Their insight into the procedures and patterns of lawmaking—often overlooked by PMOs—may help provide valuable information for users.

A focus on current legislation would imply linking influence to projects: listing "supporters" and "opponents" of the project, and cross-referencing for conflicts of interest, criminal charges or ongoing legal proceedings. As Cesar Zucco suggested, the latter might involve using data from different government watchdogs and the courts. Monica Pachón and Andrew Mandelbaum both noted that when legislators are evaluated by PMOs, they become more interested in their performance and the activities of the evaluator, creating opportunities for feedback, if not collaboration.

Whatever the approach it takes, it is clear that Vota Inteligente is well placed in Chile's transparency and accountability ecosystem and that its technological capabilities are top-notch. The challenge now is to launch the new site and ramp up demand and impact, both online and offline.

Legislative Information Seeking in Colombia

Colombians seek legislative information from diverse sources, a likely result of sub-par parliamentary websites. To some extent, Congreso Visible's website serves as a substitute for that of parliament.

Carolina Botero,[49] a lawyer and academic who works for Creative Commons at the Karisma Foundation, follows many types of legislation focused on the issue of information. She relies on the media for her primary news, and for details visits Congreso Visible. She finds it "objective," "trustworthy," and "very academic." Botero also sources information from Terra's *Vote* Bien,[50] and Corrupedia[51] and she claims that the websites of the lower and upper houses of congress are both poor. Julian Ortega Martinez,[52] a freelance journalist who contributes to the NGO Global Voices, also uses Congreso Visible. "It's very advanced, very

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[47] Agustín Ferraro, "Friends in High Places: Congressional Influence on the Bureaucracy in Chile," *Latin American Politics and Society* 50, no. 2 (2008): 101-129.

[48] Personal interview, July 29, 2011.

[49] Personal interview, August 16, 2011.

[50] http://www.votebien.com/

[51] http://corrupedia.com/

[52] Personal interview, August 24, 2011.

complete," he remarked. He also commented on Congreso Visible's prominence: "They have gotten around well."[53] Ortega Martinez depends on people's comments on Congreso Visible to evaluate laws. As for the country's official websites, "you have to know the number of the law if you want to find it; you can't just search by name," he claims.

Colombia's market for private legislative information is also fairly strong. Sandra Viviana Perez Cruz[54] works for Colombia's FLIP,[55] the Foundation for Press Freedom. FLIP is frequently present in congress because of the "need to act quickly." Yet surprisingly, the organization uses a private, paid service—Artículo 20.[56] Perez Cruz knows Congreso Visible, but had not formed an opinion on the platform. Similarly, lawyer and business consultant Lorenzo Villegas Carrasquilla also uses a private service, Legis Movil.[57] Villegas Carrasquilla uses Congreso Visible to look up older legislation, but he claims, "it's not current enough. You only see information up on the site four to five days after it happened. If you're working day by day, it's not that useful." He also divulged that he has had trouble opening up the official gazettes on Congreso Visible's website. His strategy is to first find the number of the Gazette on Congreso Visible and then download the document from the senate's website. While still poor, the senate's platform is marginally better than the Chamber of Representatives, according to Villegas Carrasquilla.

Congreso Visible's *Research PMO-Model*

It is clear that Congreso Visible's presence is strong in Colombia's legislative transparency ecosystem. It is filling a gap, serving as a congressional research service where none exists, remarked its director, Monica Pachón.[58]

This statement says it well, because Congreso Visible seems to be particularly adept at serving legislators, an important sector of advocates, and academics—visitors who come to do research. It would appear to do less well, however, in attracting common citizens, the media, and the business crowd. One issue seems to be information turnaround—placing information online as quickly as possible—every traditional PMO's stumbling block. Another issue may have to do with the format of information presented. Pachón commented about the media, "they think our information is too specialized."

These two issues, timeliness and universal accessibility, represent a few of Congreso Visible's pending challenges.

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[53] "Se han movido muy bien."
[54] Personal interview, August 18, 2011.
[55] Fundación para la Libertad de Prensa.
[56] http://www.articulo20.com.co/
[57] http://www.legismovil.com/
[58] Personal interview, July 28, 2011.

While timeliness is a question of manpower, it is also a matter of convincing legislators to modernize antiquated systems. Chile's Vota Inteligente obtains about half its legislative data from scraping,[59] yet they're working to convince the government to adopt an API.[60] In Colombia, modernization could help Congreso Visible bridge the time-gap between the legislative act and the online post. Surely a case for modernization would find a sympathetic ear given Congreso Visible's good relations with politicians. Yet perhaps it is worth considering whether Congreso Visible's position as a substitute for congress is delaying this needed update; or, put differently, whether a modern national platform might diminish the relevance of Congreso Visible within the legislative ecosystem.

The second issue is Congreso Visible's incongruence with less research-oriented visitors. Blogs by politicians are a good start, but it would be relatively easy for Congreso Visible to create a stand-alone page of visualizations or quotations—as discussed in reference to Vota Inteligente's Social Accountability Model.

Many PMOs have to focus more strongly on universal accessibility and even engagement—making platforms intelligible and attractive for all levels of society. One approach is to liven-up information: place pictograms next to bills or committees in order to indicate the issue-area and provide a quick visual heuristic. A bill on health would have a pictogram containing a red cross and one on security, a policeman's hat, for example. Engaging educational tools, for instance, are perennially deficient among PMOs. Chile's Vota Inteligente explains the legislative process with a soundless slide-show video and written explanations; Vote na Web does not have any educational aides; and Congreso Visible's section on "Our Democracy" has all the requisite information, but with the exception of a small flowchart it is all written—not fun.

One platform to look at is Mexico's Curul501, a joint project of FUNDAR and Citivox.[61] Curul501 has developed a good section on "Understanding Your Congress,"[62] with fun cartoons. Equally valid are videos of people talking about congress, personal stories about the trajectory of a certain bill in congress, slides with accompanying voice-over, or actual videos shot in congress—helping to lend legislators and the legislative process a more accessible air. Animated surveys or quizzes on the legislative process might be a useful teaching aid for high school and university classes. In short, there is much that can be done to make learning engaging, and education should be a priority among each and every different type of PMO. Further recommendations are available in the appendix.

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[59] Scraping is a computer software technique of extracting information from websites. This claim was made by Juan José Soto, manager of Ciudadano Inteligente.

[60] An API is an application programming interface, a set of programming instructions and standards used by software-to-software interfaces to communicate with each other—typically for accessing a web-based software application or a web tool.

[61] FUNDAR is also known as the Center for Analysis and Investigation: http://fundar.org.mx/ . Citivox is a real-time report management service: http://citivox.com/. Both are funded by the Open Society Foundations.

[62] http://www.curul501.org/about

CONCLUSION

The dynamic growth of informatics promises parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) greater reach and measurable impact, both online and offline. PMOs have been proliferating across Latin America as have collaborative efforts: the Latin American Network for Legislative Transparency[63] was created in 2009, and now includes 15 different PMOs in five countries. Internet penetration, incomes, and educational attainment are growing across the region—auspicious signs for heightened demand and effective use of legislative information.

Yet the region's political legacy and institutional configurations pose significant challenges. A majority of Latin Americans do not trust parliaments or parties. Transparency and the technologies to amplify its effects are often deficient in parliament and resisted by politicians, rendering the work of PMOs difficult. Finally, several of the region's countries still have no dedicated PMOs, including Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Panama, and Uruguay.[64]

The report began by highlighting the importance of voting transparency as a goal yet to be fully realized. PMOs ought to continue to push for transparency and APIs so that data on parliaments can flow freely. The first section also discussed the need for PMOs to attend to the challenges posed by particular institutional configuration: strong presidents and weak legislator-constituent connections. Yet there is institutional variation across the region, and PMOs must design strategies accordingly.

The second part of the report examined the study's three principal case studies and their national settings—Brazil's Vote na Web, Chile's Vota Inteligente, and Colombia's Congreso Visible. It analyzed internet traffic and promotional strategies and found that search engine optimization should be a priority. All but Congreso Visible's Google search results were poor. It also found that outreach can play an important role in increasing traffic, creating measurable impact, and fostering the growth of a country's transparency infrastructure and ecosystem.

A final section examined the availability of legislative information and the strategic position of PMOs within each country. It found that Brazil's Vote na Web serves more as a vehicle for political engagement and participation than as a vehicle for research or monitoring. By contrast, Vota Inteligente and its parent foundation, Ciudadano Inteligente, act as a social accountability initiative by promoting accountability, advocating reform, and advancing transparency and openness more generally. Finally, Congreso Visible is clearly oriented toward serving as a valuable resource for research. The organizations in question thus

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[63] Red Latinoamericana por la Transparencia Legislativa.

[64] This assertion is based on the work of Andrew Mandelbaum, who catalogued PMOs around the world. See, Andrew G Mandelbaum, Forthcoming: *Strengthening Parliamentary Accountability, Citizen Engagement and Access to Information: A Global Survey of Parliamentary Monitoring Organizations* (Washington: National Democratic Institute and the World Bank Institute, 2011).

represent three models of PMO: the Engagement Model, the Social Accountability Model, and the Research Model.

There may be other models out there. A PMO focused on aggregating and funneling the interests of citizens and organizations to appropriate policy-based interest groups may yet represent a further model, an "Interest Group Aggregator Model," so to speak. We may even see "recruitment" models sprouting-up: crowdsourcing sites that support and encourage well-qualified people to enter politics, overcoming the perception that politics is the realm of the corrupt.

 Greater research is needed to better understand the needs of legislative information-seekers and how PMOs can more effectively design strategy. To the author's knowledge, only the informatics non-profit MySociety has undertaken large-scale surveys of visitors to a PMO website. Visitor research may be easily undertaken by integrating surveys into websites.

PMOs should continue to experiment; the use of informatics for parliamentary monitoring is still young and ripe for innovation. But PMOs should be mindful that political context ought to dictate strategy, and strategy, tools. An extensive list of more practical recommendations can be found in the appendices.

APPENDIX 1: TOOLS AND TACTICS FOR ONLINE AND OFFLINE PMO STRATEGY

The following recommendations were compiled with the help of numerous people, including Open Society Foundations consultant David Sasaki, Andrew Mandelbaum of the National Democratic Institute, Tiago Peixoto of the World Bank Institute, Cristiano Ferri of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, David Moore of the Participatory Politics Foundation, Joshua Tauberer of PopVox, and Tony Bowden of MySociety.

As discussed throughout the principal document, Parliamentary Power to the People: Analyzing Offline and Online Strategies in Latin America, *tactics and tools such as the ones listed below can replace neither strategy nor offline outreach. Nor are all of the listed tactics appropriate for every PMO. It is important to adopt tools on an as-needed basis.*

Optimize: Most traffic comes from searches, even in the case of the world's leading PMOs. Optimization strategies should be a top priority for all PMOs using informatics. Seeking out grants or free collaboration from technology companies—e.g., Google—is a low-cost means of increasing reach. Ensuring PMOs are cited in Wikipedia and other reference websites, including allied NGO websites, can also help drive traffic to PMO websites.

Time: Certain events—elections, national commemorations, scandals, or crises—ignite exponential interest in politics. This is the time for PMOs to lead. PMOs should focus on outreach and public relations, and may consider creating relevant applications or tools, such as a survey or candidate-matching tool for elections.

➔ **Temporal Context:** A different "time" consideration is the analytical division of "approved legislation, under consideration, and pending" on PMO websites. Dividing legislation by temporal indicator may help users to better navigate sites. The age of legislation may also provide important clues as to its relevance.

Praise: PMOs may try to remain politically neutral, but their user comments and the general use of these sites may convey to politicians that they are adversarial. PMOs should consider awarding prizes to legislators for different measures of performance. They should also try to establish constructive working relationships with congress more generally, through praising innovative or principled parliamentary behavior. Engaging with parliamentarians will be covered further on.

Specialize: Instead of providing dozens of functionalities on one website, dividing them up into single-functionality platforms with unique URLs may be more cognitively attractive for users. The leading example is mySociety's variety of websites: Theyworkforyou.com, writetothem.com, whatdotheyknow.com, and so forth. Chile's Ciudadano Inteligente has also been following this strategy.

Share: Although obvious, it bears repeating that social media should be employed pervasively as a communication tool. Websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Scribd, Flickr, and Tumblr provide useful vehicles for message dissemination. It should also be noted

that "sharing" is more about interacting with the general political ecosystem than just about single-minded self-promotion, which can turn people off.

Plug-in: Use social media plug-ins to up the exposure of conversations taking place on your platform.

Visualize: Visualizations fall into two categories: ready-made, and do-it-yourself. Dedicating one page of a website to providing ready-made visualizations of some of the most important indicators of legislative activity may provide a great resource for bloggers, journalists, teachers, and policymakers. These visualizations might also provide code, so they can be embedded on websites and updated automatically through scripts. Do-it-yourself visualizations can also be useful. The World Bank's Open-Data Catalogue stands out as an example (http://data.worldbank.org/). Data is selected by the users, who are then able to create visualizations.

Alert and Inform: Newsletters and tracking alerts should be integrated into all PMO sites, providing the option to receive information as emails, RSS, SMS, by Twitter, posting to Facebook. Many PMOs integrate this functionality, which is typically based on keywords (e.g. politician X, or issue Y). Keyword parsing should be applied not just to what bills come up on the legislative agenda, but also which bills are spoken about during debate—a tactic pioneered by mySociety.

Pull: Users often prefer to be "pulled" to sites by email newsletters, feeds, tweets, or Facebook posts by website administrators. A strong "pull-strategy" also means making sure sign-up boxes and Twitter handles are prominently displayed on other information sources of relevance to the parliamentary process. This could mean news media websites, blogs, etc.

Engage: Multiple engagement tools, such as quizzes, opinion-solicitation, surveys, liking, and comment—ranking help citizens engage with the website. These engagement tools render a site more than a passive information source.

Evaluate: Furnish a space for users to post statements made by leading politicians and have others vote on their truthfulness or accuracy. Fact-checking websites may be recruited to take part in such initiatives.

Specify location: Users should be able to obtain a short and uniform URL linking every element on a website, such as a vote or committee session. Easy and precise linking is critical for relaying information over social media channels, such as Twitter. It also helps increase your search engine optimization scores.

Illustrate with pictograms and pictures: The way PMOs display legislation tends to be confusing and boring. Pictograms may help. If it's a health bill, put a picture of a red-cross or a stethoscope. If it's an education bill, put a picture of a chalk board or graduation cap. Legislation is technical, and while necessary, the codes placed beside bills—e.g., h.r.1072—trigger memories of civics class or the complexity of politics. Another aspect of pictures is screenshots. Integrating screenshot tools onto PMO websites may also be a good idea. This would permit users to take a picture of the page and upload it to a blog or send it by email. Several programs can be integrated into websites, such as Snapcasa and Gyazo.

Webcast: Putting offline events online is a great way to draw interest and visitors. Videos are an under-utilized medium on PMO sites. Placing videos on Youtube is also much under-utilized.

Translate: Foreigners should to some extent be able to understand your single-language website—even if current translation tools are far from perfect. Google translation is embeddable.

Comment and annotate: Being able to place a comment below a website element ("comments") or on an element—such as a bill—(an annotation) will help people better understand the repercussions of legislative activity. Annotations and comments should be searchable by different tags, such as date and issue, and users must be able to hide annotations if they wish to read a "clean" text. An example of a helpful tool is http://www.documentcloud.org/home

Match: Permitting voters to find the best candidate by matching their preferences on an online survey can be a politically useful exercise and, as mySociety and other PMOs have reported, such matching exercises tend to appeal to people. EU Profiler provides an example of a matching tool (http://www.euprofiler.eu/)

Write: Letter-writing tools help constituents put together letters to their representatives, and then send them. Writetothem.com is a leading example.

Group: In the style of a Google Groups, PMOs facilitate the meeting of minds interested in similar policy or political issues. A leading example is provided by OpenCongress.org.

Wiki: In order to help people understand legislative activity, OpenCongress.org has begun to work with wikis, which look at different elements of legislative activity.

Suggest: Many websites integrate feedback widgets into the side or bottom of their websites. These tools can help PMOs improve functionality. Third-party services, such as Uservoice can also be helpful.

Embed: PMOs should provide a list of embeddables at a PMO site, or specific widgets associated with specific laws. By pasting code into a blog entry, for example, supporters of a bill can see how many people have supported or opposed a bill or can encourage others to take a stand on an issue. Popvox provides a leading example (https://www.popvox.com/ see http://bit.ly/pxJiUD at the bottom of the screen). PMOs should reach out to NGOs, encouraging them to place these embeddable widgets on their pages.

Support/Oppose: Voters should be able to support or oppose legislation on the website. Totals are then displayed. Supporters and opponent interest groups and active links to their sites should also be identified alongside each bill, as discussed later on.

Map: Pioneered by Vote na Web (see report), these are maps of votes cast by users and legislators according to their electoral district of origin (one map for each). They are attractive for users, helping them to visualize preferences by region.

Crowdsource: Crowdsourcing of legislative activity still has to be fully explored, but activities might include the analysis or summarizing of legislation, either through dedicated web

forms, or by establishing partnerships with certain issue-based NGOs that agree to do the work. Crowdsourcing can also be deployed to monitor the legislature and legislative production by issue area (e.g. environmental legislation. See, for example, http://www.cidadedemocratica.org.br/tour).

Host Interns: There are never enough people to do the work of PMOs, which face great logistical challenges. Sourcing Master's or Ph.D. students—both nationally and internationally—can be a valuable means of increasing productivity, expanding networks, and linking up to funding in foreign countries. In particular, public policy or political science students from the United State, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Spain, among others, travel to Latin America to do research and may be happy to lend their assistance in return for contacts or tips.

Notify: Contact parliamentarians and relevant issue-based NGOs when relevant legislative or social initiatives appear on the radar. NGOs and the private sector are particularly interested in committee deliberations, which shape the details of legislation. Open Congress' David Moore also suggests notifying legislators once a certain threshold of votes or comments have been reached on bills being considered.

Quantify: How many sessions or committee meetings have legislators missed? How many staff members do they have back in their home constituencies? How much money did they raise for their election campaigns? How many legislators responded to letters sent requesting their position on a certain issue? Charting these quantitative metrics will allow visitors to use the data and promote the website. Beware of promoting perverse incentives for politicians. For instance, mySociety once publicized the number of times a legislator spoke in parliament. As a result, some parliamentarians began to make more contributions—of uncertain quality—to increase their numbers.

Qualify: Link explanations on quantitative results. These explanations should either be formulated in-house, or they might be found at the blogs of parliamentarians, on videos or within the transcripts of parliamentary debates.

Highlight: If the user conducts a search, highlight the searched terms in the resulting documents or search results (blurbs) in order to expedite his or her search process.

Aggregate: Searching by keywords in one giant document—let's say a 15 page document of a legislator's speeches over the course of a year—or hyper-linking within a document is often easier than opening up dozens of documents and searching each individually. Instead of putting individual bills up one document at a time, copy them by issue area or legislator into one document. Clicking on a particular bill will bring you to a linked heading.

Link: Ensure that all elements can be traced. Legislation should be linked to politicians, committees, discussions, and supporters and opponents. The backwards and forwards linkages of legislation and politicians are especially crucial. Other elements that should be considered include:
  ▪ *Campaign finance*: Information should be made available on contributions and contributors to the election campaigns of individual legislators, and to political action

committees or interest groups. This information should be associated with bills being considered or passed. Contributors tend to exercise influence over legislators.

- *Backgrounds and Relationships*: Similarly, mapping relationships may also help reveal potential conflict-of-interest. Background is the first issue. If Representative Smith worked at IBM and Cisco systems, his interest in a bill to refurbish all federal computer systems must be carefully scrutinized. The same is true of relationships. If Smith worked with closely with Joe Brown at IBM and Brown is heading up IBM's potential contract, attention must be paid to potential conflicts of interest.

- *Supporters / Opponents*: Salient supporters and opponents of a bill should be identified so citizens might have the choice of getting involved with these organizations. Links to these organizations should be made available, and perhaps a summary of what policy measures these organizations have supported and opposed in the past. Link-stinginess—the reluctance to provide external links for fear of losing visitors—is unfounded. Linking to other sites is a value-added that will create return visitors.

- *Petitions*: Similarly, groups of organizations may be attempting to accumulate signatures in support or in opposition to a policy. Links should be provided to these sites as well.

- *Media and blog coverage*: Media and blog feeds on pressing legislative issues help people to understand context. Next to a bill on logging, for example, news articles and blog posts from a diversity of sources should be made available on the subject of logging and environmental legislation.

- *Glossaries:* Legislative terms can be complicated, and PMOs should provide a glossary either in the form of a search function or as an alphabetical glossary.

- *No dead-ends:* Pages should always go somewhere interesting.

Educate: PMOs ought to be actively teaching citizens that they are part of the system—part of the legislative process. People should learn about all aspects of the legislative process: from adoption, to implementation, enforcement, and reform. The approach must be holistic, and should include:

- *Getting involved*: An explanation of how citizens might get involved with the policy process, contact details for interest groups, and what elements citizens should evaluate before getting involved with interest groups. For example, citizens should be taught to look for elements such as funding transparency, metrics on how funds are used, leadership, and the achievements of interest groups over time.

- *Teaching by Modules*: Instead of trying to teach the legislative process in one explanation, PMOs ought to divide the education process into short overviews followed by different modules on how legislation is initiated, the committee process, the negotiation process, and the approval process. Cartoons, videos, and slideshows with audio are best. Organizations in different countries with similar political systems and languages might collaborate to create a series of beginner and advanced modules.

- *Using Examples*: There are many great ways of understanding the legislative process. A story looking at someone's personal interest in a bill and then the bill's trajectory is one example. Another is looking at the consideration of bills from different policy areas, because they often receive different treatments. Choosing polemical issues will help pique interest, and examples should link forward and backward: How do bills come about? What happens once a law has been passed? What happens if the law is not enforced? These explanations should integrate other parts of government, such as the executive and judicial branches.

Collaborate: Collaborating with the NGOs, interest groups, the private sector, parliamentarians, and universities is a first-order strategy for increasing reach and measurable impact. One of the first goals should be to carry out educational initiatives to help these sectors better utilize PMO resources and understand missions. Greater details about these different types of collaboration are provided below:

- *Cultivating good relationships with the media*: Establish partnerships with like-minded media outlets. The integration of Congreso Visible's (http://www.congresovisible.org/) widgets into the pages of the newspaper *El Espectador* (http://elespectador.com/) has resulted in a massive increase in traffic (see principal document).
- *Cultivating good relationships with NGOs, businesses, and citizen groups*: Relationships should be cultivated across policy issue-areas and geographic boundaries. Organizing conferences, roundtables, forums, and umbrella groups is an important part of this sort of outreach. Sharing and exchanging databases, email initiatives, and campaigns with different organizations may also prove fruitful. Developing common tools with other organizations, such as transparency indices, is yet another collaborative strategy.
- *Cultivating good relationships with parliament*: Taking a simultaneous top-down (party leaders) and bottom-up (staffers) approach to cultivating relationships in parliament is a sound strategy. Evaluating legislators through different indices can attract political attention, but the metrics have to be well conceived and results have to be communicated respectfully. Giving representatives the first word on results is a respectful way of going about public disclosure. Inviting politicians to write editorials, keep a blog, or lead a webinar at a PMO site are other ways of cultivating good relationships. An important pre-election strategy is to use questionnaires for reaching out to legislators. Build a campaign around these questionnaires and create public pressure for responses. See Slovakia's Fair Play Alliance (http://www.fair-play.sk/index_en.php), for example.
- *Providing learning venues for parliamentarians*: Going offline in roundtables where politicians can speak freely about their concerns is a valuable undertaking. Congreso Visible in Colombia hosts roundtables among academic policy experts and politicians. It is easier for all to freely debate issues and ask tough questions without the media present, according to Congreso Visible's Director, Monica Pachón.

- *Creating partnerships with universities*: Universities can help with collaborative efforts, such as data-gathering and analysis, report-writing, presentations, and promotion. Collaboration with universities can help improve the credibility of PMOs. Most importantly, working with universities means working with students, and there are few segments of society as influential as young people.

APPENDIX 2: TWITALYZE MEASURES

Impact: "as defined by Twitalyzer, is a combination of the following factors: The number of followers a user has, the number of unique references and citations of the user in Twitter, the frequency at which the user is uniquely retweeted, the frequency at which the user is uniquely retweeting other people, the relative frequency at which the user posts updates."

Clout: "as defined by Twitalyzer, is the relative likelihood that an individual's Twitter username will appear when searched for in Twitter."

Influence: "is the likelihood that a Twitter user will either A) retweet something the user has written or B) reference the user. While this definition is similar to clout, influence takes both retweets and references into account, whereas clout only looks at references."

Effective Reach: "multiplies a user and each of their retweeting user's follower count by their calculated influence (the likelihood that that user will be retweeted or mentioned) to determine a likely and realistic representation of any user's reach in Twitter at any given time."