TRANSCRIPT

"THE RISE OF FAKE NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA MANIPULATION IN LATIN AMERICAN POLITICS"

A conversation with Carlos Cortés, Pablo Ortellado, Marc Silver, Yanina Valdivieso, and Antonio Martínez Velázquez

Recorded April 9, 2018

ANNOUNCER:

You are listening to a recording of the Open Society Foundations, working to build vibrant and tolerant democracies worldwide. Visit us at OpenSocietyFoundations.org.

DIEGO GARCIA:

Welcome everyone. My name is Diego Garcia. I'm a senior program officer with the Global Drug Policy Program here at Open Society Foundations. Welcome to the Open Society. It's great that you came out for this very prominent issue. It's just unfolding. We haven't seen an end to the fake news, to how-- electorates-- everywhere have been manipulated.

So we're gonna hear from different panelists, and we're very lucky to have a group of diverse researchers, filmmakers, creative writers, to talk about this issue and how it's impacting-- elections in Latin America. As you know, 70% or almost 70% of Latin Americans are electing president this year. (COUGH) And most of those elections or th-- all of those elections have been manipulated, affecting rights of drug users, criminalizing drug users, stigmatizing L.G.B.T. population and migrations or migrants.

So this is a very prominent issue for the Open Society. We've seen that the fake news and the posture is fragmenting society, and there's nothing more against the idea of open society than a fragmented society. So thank-- thanks to all the panelists that made their way here. We're very lucky to have them actually. They-- they-- they travel from many and diverse

places. Actually some of them were held in immigration for a few hours. So thank you guys. So I'm gonna give the word to Yanina Valdivieso who is a creative producer of the film that we're gonna watch. She's gonna do a prologue to the-- to the event. And after the panel and watching the clips, we're gonna open up for Q&A. Thank you and welcome.

YANINA VALDIVIESO:

(FOREIGN LANGUAGE). Good evening, everyone. (COUGH) So my name is Yanina Valdivieso. And-- the ev-- the-- the origins of the discussion topic on Latin America that gather us here today go back to the events that we will see in the film *To End a War*.

The, *To End a War* documents the agreement between the Colombian government and the F.A.R.C. guerilla-- after four years of negotiations to end-- armed conflict that had gone on for 60 years. This final agreement that was made up of a negotiation agenda basically-- d-- its most immediate effect was to-- to arrive to the ceasefire of this conflict, and for the disappearance of F.A.R.C. as an armed group.

So this final agreement after four years of negotiation was taken to popular vote in October 2016. This popular vote happened in between the U.K. referendum for the-- for the, to stay or to leave the European Union and in October and before the U.S. presidential elections in November.

The outcome of this popular vote-- revealed very genuine concerns from the Colombian population regarding this agreement with the F.A.R.C. But it also uncovered the use of fake news and the manipulation of social media in the country. Already in 2014, there had been a scandal involving a hacker-- that had actually tapped into the peace negotiations being held in Havana in favor of the opposing candidate that was running against President Santos who wa-- wanted to be reelected.

So in 2018, two, less than two years after this peace referendum, Colombia is again running a presidential-- running an election, a popular vote to choose their president. And what we found, or what is being evident is that the same discourses, the same topics, the same-- fake news are driving the-- the agenda, the news agenda. So-- with this in mind showing how the stories that had-- been created in 2016 were still or currently creating-- I mean, a debate in the country, what, we-- we think the Colombian case raised a red flag in the region.

First of the prefer-- post-truth discourse, but also on political crises-- that have unleashed in the recent years. The extraordinary case is Venezuela, but the five countries that will elect presidents in 2018 are also dealing with accountability and political crisis. The outgoing leaders are-- leaving their terms and their mandates with 20% of-- 20%, only 20% of public opinion support.

So in the light of the revelations of the Cambridge Analytica case, which Marc Silver was involved in the break news story as well, what we wanted to do was to explore if these practices were relevant for the Latin American electoral cycle and how they were operating

in-- in the region. And especially interesting for Latin America was-- the fact that the meddling with politics only three decades ago was carried out through violence, like political candidates and presidential candi-- candidates were being shot dead in the '80s and early '90s.

So-- our guests here are going to tell us about, are gonna tell us in detail what are the workings of-- of these practices, and what are the topics, the populations, the initiatives that are being targeted? Also, what are the channels that are being employed? If there is any link, if any to the Cambridge Analytica revelations. If there is an ideological or party line in these practices.

We-- the invitation of this event is to try to reflect on all the levels that these intersections and practices are being-- are happening now. So we are trying to focus on the devices that are being used, but also on how these devices are creating a bigger social discourse. How they operate, but also-- how far into the future and into policy can they reach?

And also-- with the upcoming elections in the region, what we want to also is make a call for ourselves and for the voting communities to-- to try to make their elections and to act guided but what, by what they stand for and what they defend and not for what they fear. So we're gonna watch three clips of the *To End a War* film. The film was produced between 2015 and 2017. And it goes behind the scenes of the peace negotiations that were held in Havana. These negotiations were completely shot. The Colombian popula-- it, they were held in Havana, and there was no access to the peace negotiations for the media or for any, I mean, for Colombians.

And people only knew about them during these four years through some joint communications that were sent from the island to-- Colombia. So our first clip will sort of frame the political process and what was at stake in that discussion. It's, the timeframe of the story is the last years, the last year of the four years of negotiations that began with a justice agreement that was reached between the parties.

Then clip two will walk you through the campaigns for the Yes and the No. The No was being, the No campaign was being led by ex-president, Alvaro Uribe, who is-- who was the president of Colombia for two terms. He's now a senator and also the leader of the opposition party, Centro Democratico. And the Yes campaign, you will see the president with his high commissioner for peace, Sergio Jaramillo. It's also important to take into account that the rural and the urban context in which political violence-- operated in Colombia differs. And clip three will take you to the day of the referendum. So enjoy. (VIDEO NOT TRANSCRIBED)

YANINA VALDIVIESO:

So with the outcome. (APPLAUSE) Marc Silver, the director of the feature documentary is here with us today. With the outcome of the referendum, 6,000 fighters, combatants of

F.A.R.C. were held in standby. People who had agreed with their leadership to hand over their guns and who were ready to begin a process to return to civil life.

So here today with us is Marc, who documented-- this process and more recently also had to witness-- the Cambridge Analytics revelations in the U.K., with our expert guest speakers from Mexico, Colombia and Brazil. And Catalina Perez Correa who will-- moderate today. Catalina is a law professor from the Center for Ecom-- Economic Research, C.I.D.E. in Mexico. Her scholarly research is focused on drug policy and the functioning of the criminal justice system, in particular prisons. And she is currently a visiting fellow at Yale University. So, leave you with Catalina.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Thank you. Thank you all for being here with us this evening. And thank you Diego for organizing this event on this very important-- question. And-- and of course, fake news is a very complex and difficult-- issue, which-- undermine-- well, it puts in question the possibilities of having democratic processes.

As Diego said, about 70% of Latin America are electing leaders or having elections-- during this time. And-- and I think there's a lot of things-- lot of issues that we need to think about when talking about how the media gets put out into the public. So I only have a few minutes and I just want to put some issues on the table for our panelists before I pass the word to them.

I think the question really is first about what information, whether it's true information or false information, what information reaches the public, how it reaches the public, and how the public reacts to different types of information. And I think the case of the film that we just saw is-- is a question which involves-- these three points about how-- information reaches the public.

The more traditional analysis has-- has been made on government expenditure, on media, which-- in-- in terms of official publicity and the way that creates subtle censorship. By subtle censorship we mean-- how new-- how news outlets or journalists are less willing to say what they would say if-- they know it will imply losing-- losing governmental sponsorship. And so this is the more traditional focus of what we have, and the questions that have been made both from journalists and academia. And I know Antonio's gonna speak a little bit about this, and I think it's a very important thing.

In the case of Mexico, for example, we have the-- the law of interior security that was passed recently. And one of the things we saw is, even though we had a lot of people talk-- talking against the passing of this law, not only from academics-- from activists, from nongovernment organizations, even from the U.N.-- from the inter-American Human Rights Commission talking against this law, we also saw-- huge amounts of government publicity-- spent at that time-- promoting the good image of the military and-- and trying to get people to-- to support and changing the subjects.

Not about one where it was passing this law or not passing the law, but it was either being in favor of the military or against the military. And I think this is a little bit echoes the story that Marc tells in this-- in this film-- *To End a War*.

And-- and also on top of these problems or these better-known problems, we have other, less traditional ways of selecting news feeds where positioning trending topics. A case-- again in Mexico is the story of Andrea Noel who-- was walking down the street, and somebody pulled her underwear down. And she saw that there was a film-- camera, a security camera filming it. And she tried to find-- the person who had done this to her.

And this all led to her being bullied and trolled and even-- had her life threatened, and she had to leave the country-- because of this-- story coming-- through-- social media. And then she came back to the country, and she started digging and finding the trolls that had begun to make the story-- to-- to-- to-- to make these stories-- in-- in-- in-- Twitter and-- Facebook. And she actually interviewed them.

And what she discovered was offices that were-- you know, hired by the government to position-- certain trending topics or to override a trending topic when the news that was-- trending was against the government or something that the government didn't like. And so they would position has-- hashtags. You know, they'd have like 50 people working in an office and position ha-- hashtags like, you should, you-- hashtag #YouShouldHitaWomanWhen, and so a lot of people would react to this.

And then the trending story which was something that the government had done would lose power and completely-- you know, be overridden by these other stories. So-- so that's in the question of how-- the news or information reaches the-- public. But we also have the problem of how human reacts to different types of stories. And there you might have read a recent story by-- m-- M.I.T. researchers that shows that fake news travels much faster than true news. Than the truth.

And this is not something that happens because of automated processes, but it's actually the way that humans respond to different types of news. And what this-- study shows, which if you haven't read and you're interested, I really encourage you to look for it-- is how fear, disgust, surprise, and-- the-- so fear, surprise and disgust are more, or-- or stories that create these type of reactions are more likely to be shared than other stories.

And-- you know, something that certain, this is something that certain groups have taken advantage-- of. A clear example of this is gender ideology and the idea of gender ideology, which creates a lot of fear, because it has this pl-- it has this, (THUD) been positioned as something that will be against the family. So if you want to protect your family, then you need to be against this. And-- we didn't see this in the clip that we showed, but the whole-- Colombian process was also mixed with this idea of gender ideology.

And so this-- this is-- something that's-- I think very important to know. How do people react to news? Truth, on the other hand, according to the study, which-- I mean, it reviewed more than 3 million-- tweets and retweets over the course of the existence of Twitter

(THROAT CLEARING) is met with joy or-- or sadness, but is less shared. So the problem is not only the-- the challenges-- that-- that-- that-- that it challenges the idea of free democratic elections.

But also one that makes it easier for certain types of discourses-- like hate speech to be more visible. So I think, I-- I mean, I just wanted to set a few issues, and I think we're gonna get-- to more of these things and I'll be asking you some questions. So-- we have 15 minutes for each speaker.

And so I'll present each of the speakers. We're gonna start with another short peri-- video screening, the clip-- from *The Guardian*'s Cambridge Analytica news story. And then-- we'll go over to Marc Silver. But so thank you all for being here. And-- and so, can we have that next video now?
(VIDEO NOT TRANSCRIBED)

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

So-- panelists, we have Marc Silver, who you know from the story of Cambridge Analytica, but he's also a filmmaker and director of photography. His first film, *Who Is Dayani Cristal* premiered at the Sund-- Sundance Festival in 2013, where it won cinematography award, World Cinema Documentary, and the Amnesty International Best Documentary Award of 2014. (COUGHS)

His second film, *3-1/2 Minutes, Ten Bullets*, about the murder-- murder of Jordan Davis premiered at the Sundance Festival in 2015, winning U.S. Documentary Special Jury Award for sp-- Social Impact. It was also shortlisted for an Oscar and nominated for an Emmy. And the clip that you just saw is Marc's third-- feature-length film, *To End a War*. And so I think I'll give the word to Marc. There's a sign at the end when you have one minute left, and please-- just keep to the time.

MARC SILVER:

I probably-- I probably won't use all of my time. Okay. So I think maybe the most useful thing w-- would be to try and contextualize the-- Cambridge Analytica story-- within like what's being discussed tonight. And-- I think I'll just, like, throw into the mix some-- extra stuff that I learned from spending time with Chris-- because there's a lot of context-- that we weren't able to put in a short film that went out in *The Guardian*.

So the first thing that-- really shifted my perspective in terms of privacy was, so on another project I'd met-- Edward Snowden a couple of times. And-- at the time of his revelations-- it was quite interesting and frustrating that-- that most people weren't massively concerned with the-- with the revelations of Snowden, because it was framed in the context of, or the-- the way that they r-- they kind of, like, responded to the revelations was, "If I haven't done anything wrong, then I don't have that much to worry about when it comes to privacy."

So when I spent time with-- Christopher Wylie-- I literally felt like after many-- many hours of speaking with him, that my perception of privacy and-- and literally, like, my brain-- (LAUGH) was kind of like shifted. And that's because when he explains that there is a different version of you online that is like a data shadow or-- or like-- data self of everybody online, not just through Facebook, but basically any digital interaction you have. Even moving your phone one meter is somewhere documented. So every single digital thing is documented, and that manifests as a digital version of yourself.

And it doesn't matter if you've done anything right or wrong in that context. All that matters is that it can be, you can be, your digital version of yourself can be essentially analyzed, broken down, and then content can be created to essentially abuse you via your kind of psychological vulnerabilities and shift your perception of things, without you knowing that any of that is happening. (COUGHS)

And that-- that completely changed my idea of, like, really what privacy means. And I'm doing another project, which is completely different to this on-- Ayahuasca, which is a si-- psychological-- s-- (LAUGH) not psychological, psychedelic-- plant from the Amazon, which is very much also about-- what that reveals about self and the kinda jigsaw puzzle pieces of who you are. So in-- in-- in the kinda world I inhabit, I've got, like, indigenous perspective on what self means and your relationship to nature and interconnectedness and spirit.

And on the other hand, I'm-- I'm sort of playing creatively with this idea of digital self and how that can be abused. So that was something that I've-- having spent many hours with-- with Chris-- yeah, that was something that I think, like, people should start thinking about when it comes to privacy. There was a coupla other bits and pieces that you might find interesting.

So for Chris, information-- he's-- he's essentially like an information warfare specialist. And information, the-- the reas-- one of the reasons he essentially like whistle-blew what was happening is because he got to a point of realizing that psychological warfare which is used-- normally in like a military context was being applied to the public.

And again, when you, like, speak about this for many-- many hours, you realize that, or I realized-- that potentially, like, democracy can't withstand that kind of attack. Because it's not-- it's not built in a way-- that it can withstand the power of, like, new technologies. And obviously, that has massive implications for all of our futures.

And the way he referred to this was that the narrative, so like the stories that we all receive via all mediums has essen-- has essentially been weaponized. Which then again, goes back to that first point about what I, how I started to perceive, like, individuals and society in the context of information warfare is that really we're just bits of data that are-- essentially used to enhance somebody else's power. And-- and as dark as that sounds-- I think that's how we should perceive ourselves in the light of these revelations in this kind of whistle-blowing.

And also, what was kind of new for me, of course I've al-- I've always been aware of, like, propaganda and mass media. But what-- what is now, what people are now capable of doing. It's not just about, like, old school propaganda and being able to manipulate people on a kind of mass level. Again, like, going back to the-- the data self. You are now able to be manipulated as an individual, millions and millions and millions of individuals.

So manipulation is happening on like two different frequencies all at the same time. There's the mass level, a societal level, but then also an individual level. And again, I just, I think that is massively worth thinking about. And then, I think the final thing-- po-- at least for this conversation-- is about thinking about-- essentially if-- if information and your digital self are going to be used to enhance somebody else's power, then we have to have like a really serious, much more mature conversation about who owns data.

Because whoever owns data essentially, like, owns us in-- in a manipulative way. But more importantly just owns the entire future. This-- (LAUGH) we're all gonna go home and cry. I'm just offloading the really stressful few weeks that I've had. (LAUGH) And then, sorry, and then there's one-- really interesting extra bit of information which-- which people are kind of looking into at the moment.

Which is-- so the, well, it began, when-- when I was doing the film, it was 57 million Facebook users. And-- last week, that-- it, Facebook revealed that it was-- actually 87 million people's data. But that data has been, like, available online for-- for at least a year and maybe even two years. So-- even though no one has proved where that data has gone-- it's very likely that that is the sort of package of data that ended up in Russia.

And the Mueller investigation will probably at some point link to that data. And then work out how-- Russia didn't, like, need to, like, hack the election, because they just had, like, all of the data from Facebook anyway. And the guy that-- was referenced in that clip-- Aleksandr Kogan-- who was working at Cambridge University-- also was working at St. Petersburg University at the same time-- and is Russian. Not that that means that he was, like, a spy or anything. But-- (LAUGH) but-- I'm sure the Russians were aware of what he was doing and would have been able to access the-- the Facebook data that he was giving to Chris Wylie.

I'm sure they would have been able to access that data and take it for themselves. And Cambridge Analytica had a meeting with a Russian oil company-- that's kind of a front for the F.S.B., the security services-- the CEO of which is like-- like best buddy of Putin's. So there's-- there's a lot of conversations around that area.

Because that-- that meeting was probably not about how a Russian oil company would need to use these times of tec-- these types of techniques-- to, like, sell more oil. (LAUGH) It was probably a way of getting certain information to Russian, like, you know, like, top people at Russia.

So yeah, and just probably just-- (LAUGH) just to wrap up-- the other thing that I was kinda left with-- was, if I was looking back at this moment in time in say, like, 20-- 30-- 40 years--

I've-- I kind of feel like this is the, this is a moment where we might be able to kind of s-- see, like, new power structures essentially being built in this moment of, in time. And we won't understand that until those power structures play out over the next 50 years. And then you have to think that, okay, so if that's what's going on politically with again, like, global data, the-- the things that are going on in parallel with that are the increasing-- power of competing or the increasing power of artificial intelligence.

And this kind of m-- massive, exponential curve-- where technology is-- is doing its thing, and we as a society are-- are in just, like, no position whatsoever to be able to keep up with that. And the conversations that we're having are completely outdated compared to where technology is at. And there's only a tiny elite of people who understand that technology. And so that kind of links back into, like, who owns your data? What are the new power structures?

And I think what happened with the Cambridge Analytica revelations-- is less for me, obviously the Facebook thing affects us because it affects us, like, in a personal way. But really that's just the kind of, almost like the click-bait Facebook stuff. What, for me, what's really interesting is essentially, yeah, these new power structures and how ill-eq-- ill-equipped we are to sort of have a meaningful conversation about what do we want out of technology? Et cetera, et cetera.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Thank you.

MARC SILVER:

Thank you.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Well, thank-- thank you very much. And-- I-- I, just a personal question. Do, you don't have Twitter or Facebook or anything, do you? I-- I-- I will look--

MARC SILVER:

Well, I-- I do. (LAUGH) I do. And-- yeah, so there's two, so there's ac-- again, like a couple of really quick anecdotes. So-- so-- when I first met Chris, and I-- I was like, w-- it had been five hours with me asking no questions whatsoever and he just, like, downloaded, like, you know, this whole new way of understanding the world. And I walked home that night, and I was thinking, "Oh, maybe I should, like, delete Facebook."

And then the next morning, you know, I got a message from someone who I made a film with six years ago who was a three-year-old in Honduras at the time and is now on

Facebook and is nine years old. And I never would be in touch with her if it wasn't for Facebook. So it's not that, you know, I think Facebook, I shouldn't be on Facebook. It's just that I should understand what's happening to my data if I'm on Facebook.

And then the other thing-- two really quick things. So Chris was like, "It doesn't matter if you're on Facebook or not, because there are billions of ways I can access different parts of your data. And even if you come off Facebook, it reveals to me something about your psychology that I can tap into anyway via other means."

And then the third thing that I thought was super interesting was, so at some point in the conversation when I was speaking, well, I was asking, like, "Okay, cool. So now that I get your crazy spider's web of, like, oppressive madness-- how do I resist any of that?" And it's not necessarily that you have to come off Facebook or Twitter. But what was, basically there are-- there are techniques you can use online. For example, you can download certain apps, which let's say-- you know, you go to work from 9 to 5, and you switch on your app. And it is doing completely random searches-- all through Google, so it's firing, you know, millions of completely irrelevant words to your life.

But when the algorithms are trying to understand who you are by your keyword searches, this-- this app is just completely throwing the algorithms out of like kilter. Because-- it's not like true searches of who you are. It doesn't relate to your true psychology. And I think, like, things like that in the future will be, you know, things that we should all be using.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Well thank you. And-- and-- and I just-- (LAUGHTER) just no--

MARC SILVER:

I'm gonna invest in that company. No sorry, go ahead. (LAUGH)

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Just to-- you-- you were saying that the Ayahuasca project was completely unrelated. I think, I mean, there is a point where, we were talking about this earlier how the-- the same issues that we see with-- gender-- no sorry, the gender ideology is also used for drug crimes to-- to try and scare people and-- and get people on-- or-- or to-- to support a certain political project. And-- and I think there's-- there is some connection there. But-- so I'll-- I'll start with our next speaker. Pablo Ortellado.

He's a professor of public policy and management at the University of Sao Paolo, and has taken part in recent protest movements in Brazil. His research interests include copyright policies, access to information-- cultural policies and social movements.

In 2012, he was recognized by the Brazilian government for his research into the creative economy. In 2005, he was-- he had a fellowship from Open Society, and his research then focused on t-- studying why international protest movements often reject representative government while simul-- simultaneously defending better public services from the state. (OVERTALK)

PABLO ORTELLADO:

Hello. I want to-- well, first, thank you for the invitation. It's-- it's a pleasure to be talking to you this evening. And I wanted to talk to you a little bit about public debate in Brazil and Latin America. And because I think that the fake news problem is like-- side effect of political polarization.

And I want to show you some of the data that we've been collecting, analyzing, monitoring social media use in the politica-- for political purposes in Brazil. So-- let me first just give you a few-- present you some of the data that we have, and then we can discuss-- in face of it. Can you-- this is it. So-- I'm not sure-- if everybody is familiar with that kind of structure. This is a graph. A graph is a mathematic-- mathematical structure made of nodes and connections.

In this graph, which is very-- you cannot read it, but every node, every dot is-- Facebook page. And the connections between those dots are stronger when the same person likes posts from that page. We collect data from-- 14 ta-- 14-- 14 million people in June two-- 2013 during the protests in Brazil in 2013. So this is about 40% of the population using Facebook at that time.

So when two people, when one person liked a post from-- from two pages, those pages, we have a connection, and the stronger the connection, the more people like-- like posts from two pages. So-- not only they have stronger connections, but they are closer. So when those dots got close, like, making li-- like clusters, that-- that means that we have, like a large community of tens of thousands, maybe a few million people who just like that subject and they make-- like a small cluster.

So this is, this was face-- the political Facebook dur-- in Brazil in 2013 during the protests which changed dramatically the way that politics is played in Brazil. But before the protests, this was Facebook. If you-- if you look, you have like eight clusters in the top. You have politicians. So there are a lot of people who are like-- liking posts from politicians, leftwing, rightwing and center politicians.

And in the bottom, you would have in green-- environmental pages. In orange, you will have-- human rights NGOs. In blue, you have like a cluster of mixturing. Feminists. Black movement and L.G.B.T. And then in purple-- light purple you would have anti-corruption movement, and dark purple you have punitivists. People asking for more harsher, criminal-- sentences to-- harsher punishment for criminals. So that will make another commu-- community.

The closer the communities means that they're people who likes both subjects. So it was structure, it was-- there was 12 to 14 million people where s-- it was divided into these reader communities-- liking those pages according to this pattern. After the protests things changed dramatically. We have that data from when Facebook started in Brazil. But after the protests, this pattern changed dramatically from in July and in August. And when we got to May 14, the structure was like that. Very polarized. And it has stayed like that since then. From 2014-- 2015-- '17-- and today. That means when we got the structure like that is that basically all those communities merged into like one, into two communities. So-- so anti-corruption merged with-- the community who read posts from anti-commu-- anti-corruption pages merged with rightwing politicians' pages that merged with anti-feminist pages and merged with-- punitivist-- criminal pages. So just, this is just one big cluster in blue.

And the other side of the political spectrum, you would have feminists and L.G.B.T., black movement, envir-- part of environmentalism and-- and human rights all merged with the pages of leftwing politicians. And that changed dramatically, very quickly-- in the-- in a timeframe of maybe ten months, and it has stayed like that since then.

The-- so this is what, how we measure-- political polarization in Brazil. That's about 10% to 15% of the population of Brazil has this standard of, like, and what happened to the other 85%? They-- they don't interact with political pages. They are like-- we see memes and-- and cats and soccer and other interesting things.

So-- this is how the structure was changed. And this is not so-- oh, I forgot to mention. We have a few environmental pages in the middle. Environmentalism isn't polarized in Brazil. It's different than the U.S. and it's-- we don't know exactly how, why that happened. A few observations. The driving force behind political polarization in Brazil is anti-corruption. It's anti-corruption that's, you know-- force in this polarization process. And-- and it's making it merge. It-- it's the center of the cluster is anticorruption campaigns. And it-- it's now clustering with antifeminism as I assigned. And-- and campaigns asking people for harsher penalty for criminals.

On the other side, L.G.B.T. are-- especially-- campaigns for transgender people's rights are-- are interacting m-- more heavily with pages of leftwing politicians and political parties. And, but the thing is, this is not about Brazil, because we have measured other countries in Latin America. For example, this is-- Argentina. It's exactly the same. It's in fact, more polarized than Brazil. We can actually measure the distance between the two clusters.

And-- it's very-- it's very polarized. And the thing is that what's driving this polarization process is-- is what we call m-- the moral issues. I think in the U.S., we tend to call it the social issues. Meaning gay rights, abortion-- gun control, gay marriage, that sort of issues. And it's been like a driving force separating, splitting the-- the-- the political community into two.

So in Latin America, if you look generally it varies a lot, according country to country, but generally you have like three-- main forces, which is anti-corruption is-- fighting (FOREIGN LANGUAGE), gender ideology, which is-- campaign from-- promoted by the

Catholic Church, again, so in the defense of the traditional family against feminism and-- and transgender rights.

And-- and (FOREIGN LANGUAGE), the-- the idea that we have to have, like, harsher criminal penalty for-- for criminals. And the other thing that we know, it's not only in Brazil, not only Argentina, about 10% to 15% are-- are really polarized. It's not, it's too many people for-- for-- for us to consider it-- elite phenomenon. It's too many people, but it's not too much that-- that we can say that all societies polarize. I think it's the same in the U.S. It's-- smaller portion, but-- but it's a very-- important portion of the population.

It's the people who-- who like political subjects, what we call the public political, the-- the-- the-- the-- the political public sphere. The-- the digital political sphere, if you want. So-- so everybody who's into politics are really divided. It's in Brazil only like 10% of the people who are into politics are not divided. So it's-- it's-- it's a really important division.

So-- what does it has to do with-- fake news? The, it has to do with fake news, because polarization is an exacerbation of antagonism. It's an antagonism so strong that you do not accept the other. And-- and-- and you have an automatic response, in which everything the other side says "yes," you say "no," and vice versa. So you automatically, everything that's touched by polarization divides society automatically. So when we see that those communities in the graphic I've shown, that they merge, that means that if you are a feminist now, you most certainly are leftist.

If you're a feminist you most certainly are anti-racist. And if you are conservative, you probably is-- against b-- big government. So-- so-- so there was a convergence of opinion on-- on-- really large scale in Brazil and Argentina and other Latin America countries and in the U.S. of course. I suppose you are very familiar with that. (SNIFF)

So but-- but this is like a strong sentiment of opposition. And this sentiment must be kept-- alive. So-- so when this process established itself, with it came like an ecosystem of communication that basically fools this polarization process. What we call hyperpartisan websites, who are basically every day producing news, who-- who translate the facts of the day into the narratives of the two polarized fields.

So every day in Brazil, we measure-- about 5,000 news stories are produced to-- to-- to fool this political environment, ice-- so every day 5,000 stories are produced. And most of them are really polarized. We measure-- we did a lot of studies. For example, before you-- you probably heard-- Brazilian president was impeached-- two years ago. In the week before the impeachment, we measured 85% of the headlines fat-- fit exactly into the narratives of one of the two fields.

So basically everything that is shared on Facebook is-- is polarized discourse. It's only, so and-- and this is really relevant, because-- Facebook is the second source for-- news information in Brazil. It's in the U.S. It's in-- in most countries in Latin America and in ur-- in Europe. It's only behind television. And people go to Facebook to-- to learn about the news. And the news that they had is only polarized opinion, even when it comes from

mainstream sources. Because what's shared is a selection of the m-- of this, the headlines in the mainstream sources that fit the narratives of two fields.

So the problem is not only that we are having malicious websites and Facebook pages and finishing-- that are producing and fitting this war. The problem is that we have an Army of millions of citizens who are polarizing who see themselves as soldiers in a kind of information war. And that's the-- the-- the-- this is why-- we-- the problem that we're facing is not about malicious agents, Russians or whatever. It's a problem that we are very divided, and we are in war against each other.

And this is why the, in the same week that I mentioned, we measured the five most shared-- news-- during the-- the week of the impeachment of the president. Three of them were false, and they formed political opinion, had a bad effect, and it's because we're at war. And I don't know how to get out of this. But-- (LAUGHTER) that's where we are. Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Well, I-- I do think that it would be great that, if in the questions and comments you could think of later, give us some good news about, you know, how do we go back to a less polarized society? And-- how do we use these same tools to-- to-- you know, to create a more cohesant-- society? And-- well, now-- it's-- Antonio Martínez Velázquez.

He is cofounder of *Horizontal* in Mexico. It's a cultural center and diginel-- digital outlet seeking to build stronger citizenship through open discussion forums, the publication and analysis of data, and also to inform-- (COUGH) and to create in-depth journalism. He also cofounded Democracia Deliberada, which is a leftwing group of professionals, academics and activists who promote change in public policy, stemming from the ideas of a parliamentary democra-- democracy and public deliberation processes.

He's a writer in *Animal Politico*, I would say one of, well, the most important digital news outlets in Mexico. He also writes in *Horizontal* which is another news outlet in Mexico, and-- and he writes for other media. He's also an advisor to *Huffington Post* in Mexico, and so-- you have 15 minutes, Antonio.

ANTONIO MARTÍNEZ VELÁZQUEZ:

Thank you-- thank you. Good night, everyone. It's-- it's-- it's a really-- topic that I-- I've been studied a long time. And-- and I, like Catalina said, I will be a little more traditional on my approach-- because-- I think-- Mexico or the environment in Mexico shares-- some characteristics with another countries, not only in Latin America but in the global South. And I think it's-- it's worth to explore this-- this characteristics that-- that I, that-- that in my view-- make up good field, a fertile field for the fake news, disinformation phenomena, and computational propaganda. So-- okay, yes. What is the media landscape in Mexico?

Well, the media landscape in Mexico is obviously highly concentrated. Now, it-- it-- it is like four or five, 20 families-- had, have all the media in Mexico. And the other more diverse media today, as you can see-- and say at *Animal Politico*-- the relationship between owners of the (UNINTEL) powers and political power remains intact. Print media is part of the governmental machinery.

During 2016, the federal government spent over almost $500 million on governmental advertisement. And this is not regulated. We are now in-- in the middle of-- of this battle for the democratization of the media in Mexico. Nor are transparent criteria for its allocation. The more it interferes with information, making it harder to distinguish the truth from pure propaganda from the government.

For local newspaper, the struggle is harder. If we follow the money-- to see where literal decisions stem from, we find that around 50% of local newspaper income comes from local advertisement. I'm-- I mean, it this, I-- when-- when I-- I-- I conducted and-- and researched on local newspapers on this kind of problems. And yes, $5 out of $10 of-- of their income were from the government.

And we documented some cases that are really-- illustrative about this-- this-- this phenomena, because the-- the government directly sends the-- the government, the-- the newspaper-- newsrooms-- petitions, very concrete petitions about how-- what topics they can inform on and what topics they can't. So it is a method of control and indirect censorship. Another thing we decided to do to prove this. Some years ago, we decided to find the public advertising affected the teacher criteria of newspapers nationwide. And we analyzed almost 6,000 affirmed pages from six national print newspapers. And we find that more than half of the effective space, what is effective space, in a front n-- in-- in a front page.

It is-- it is the space of the-- of the front page without the advertising-- spaces. So this effective space in the front page of Mexico's newspapers, six, the six more important-- is devoted to notes that are based only on statements by a single person, institution or organization. Mainly this-- this is the president or some-- cabinet members. And this finder—this-- this finding undermines-- one of the main objectives of journalism, to say the truth.

You know-- it is-- so, it-- it is frequently-- in Mexico that the newspapers where the people that-- that is, that are not connected to the internet-- they only see these newspapers. And these newspapers are totally manipulated by the government-- in-- in-- in the national level and obviously in the local level.

And in the local level-- we are-- we are finding now they are growing this-- this news-- news-- news pages. And-- and luckily that-- that have the same pattern-- to do this. I-- I-- I-- interviewed some-- some authorities, local authorities and municipal authorities. And they said me directly that they-- they-- they encourage the journalists, the local journalists to-- to open-- their businesses of this-- of this webpage. So this is the media landscape.

We call it-- we call it sa-- synchronized-- (LAUGHTER) swimming. Because-- because one-- one of-- you know, when something is-- is-- is in the news or when we-- when we perceive that-- that something is very important like, for example-- the-- the highly surveillance of-- of, from the government to activists and journalists-- it is not in the-- in this effective-- in effective space of the front page.

They-- they also are looking to another topic, like this. And while everyone is talking about espionage and surveillance. So-- that-- that's-- it's a way to portray the-- the-- the national newspapers in-- in Mexico. What is the digital landscape?

65 million people have access to internet. 53.85 million Facebook users and 11 million Twitter accounts. 81 million people have access to mobile phone. You know, this-- this-- this gap is-- is very common in-- in-- in the countries with high rates of inequality, because-- l-- the land lines are less than the mobile phones. And in the mobile phones, we have these zero (?) rates-- zero rate-- plans that-- that exploit the data of poor people basically, to-- stole their data. And-- and-- and-- and that's why the difference between 65 million to 81 million. It is important. And-- and it's happening in-- in countries in Africa and all across Latin America.

In Mexico, this is the habits-- the habits of the-- of the users of internet. Almost if you-- if-- if we see the-- the-- the-- the-- the first five-- or six-- habits more common in-- in Mexico, we have communications, access to information, access to audiovisual content, entertainment, and social networks. And then it fall to education and interact with the government.

This is-- this is-- this is a national-- survey conduct by a Public Institute of Statistics in Mexico. So it is interesting because-- because the people in Mexico tend to-- look-- or-- or go to the internet to look-- to information, news, social-- social networks. And-- and to communicate each other. More than-- than-- than other inf-- communication's infrastructure. Okay. Elections. Where after this context of-- of-- of-- of-- of-- of where is Mexico right now? We can see we are a pioneer in-- in-- in the use of bots to interfere social media. In Mexico since the-- the last election in 2012-- we-- we-- we discovered this-- this, we have this, we had this platform con-- called (FOREIGN LANGUAGE) or "chase a bot." That-- that was a campaign in the-- in that time. We are not aware what-- what it really means in the global-- context.

We-- we know and we-- in that time, the only thing we really understand-- is that some automated site accounts are flooding all the streams of conversations, and that the Pena Nieto that is now the president-- are-- are the chief of s-- this cyber troops. So yes, we-- we-- we studied this. One-- one of these examples I-- I put is-- is-- is-- ap-- ap-- a protestor's-- have used a hashtag-- (FOREIGN LANGUAGE), all demonstration anti-- anti-Pena Nieto, to organize their efforts-- against-- Pena Nieto and to gather in-- in-- in the-- in the main street of Mexico City. (COUGH)

But then the-- the bots-- started to flood in the Twitter and disorganized all the information and all the people that are organized around that hashtag. And-- and-- and very important al-

- obviously, that-- that-- that kind of-- of interaction-- prevents Twitter to put this-- this as a trending topic. Even if it was a trending topic, this cyber troops of-- of bots prevent it.

This is what it looks like in 2000 and-- and '12. The bots. We-- we-- we use this-- we use a TweetDeck and we-- we looked at-- at the pictures like this girl called (UNINTEL). We look at the pictures in-- in-- in (UNINTEL), and we-- we found every picture in-- in (FOREIGN LANGUAGE) or "chase a bot." There is this historical-- timeline of what happened in that election. But-- but-- the-- the-- the messages are-- are supporting-- Pena Nieto.

Then after Pena Nieto won, the-- this was the new normal in Mexico. The new normal was this-- this-- Pena Nieto founded this National Digital Strategy office that is-- not only the face for the government for open government partnerships and all the digital issues from public policy, but also-- they had an-- an office that-- that I call para-digital, or you know, little, like-- like paramilitary, like para-digital campaign to infiltrate social media every time in-- in-- in the public conversation in Mexico.

One-- one of them, for example, it-- it is-- it is not clear, but-- but this is the second-- the second-- State of the Union of-- in Mexico. And around the conversation, all around it is-- a ring of bots. Like, inca-- containing the conversation, that it-- it was called (FOREIGN LANGUAGE), that is-- (LAUGH) all the expenditures in-- in, of the government that are not for-- for the benefit of the people. Thank you.

This is the same of (FOREIGN LANGUAGE)-- (FOREIGN LANGUAGE). This is the-- the case of surveillance. The-- the-- the, this-- this graphic from the-- from your left-- it is the organic conversation about (FOREIGN LANGUAGE). And-- and the other one-- on-- on the right, it is the conversation with this cyber troops around it to-- contain the-- the conversation. And it was a really important conversation to-- how to-- and that-- that still it is not-- responded by the government.

The government literally-- they bought-- intelligent software to spy some of-- of-- of activists, political adversaries and journalists. And this was the conversation that was contained (TIMER BELL) by the-- by the government. Ah. Okay, I-- I-- I put only my four points. I-- I-- I intended to explain-- ev-- every-- every candidate, but the-- the 2018 elections was-- four concerns. Censorship, the role of the platforms, the political advertising, like is-- Cambridge Analytica, and of course, the role of the media-- in Mexico. I don't have more time, but thank you everyone. (APPLAUSE)

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Sorry about that. Thank you-- Antonio. And-- now we're going back to Colombia with-- Carlos Cortés. So-- Carlos Cortés directs and pres-- the video blog (FOREIGN LANGUAGE). You can look it up online if you are interested in watching it. And this-- blog combines commentary and satire to analyze political issues, criticize media coverage, and explain policy problems in an accessible format. So I really encourage you to see if-- if you haven't.

Car-- Carlos is also an internet policy and freedom of expression consultant. He currently is an external advisor of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of the Organization of the American States. He's a researcher on internet policy issues at the Center For Freedom of-- of Expression at Palermo University in Argentina.

He was director of the Foundation of the Freedom of The Press. He has a media law profess-- or sorry, he has been a media law professor and has also worked as a journalist. Until February 2017, he was Twitter's public policy manager for Spanish-speaking Latin America.

CARLOS CORTÉS:

Thank you very much. I'm going to stand up, because I'm aware that everybody's about to sort of, I don't know, tired. So I'm going to make sure I get your attention. If you can t-- please tell under five minutes, so I'm not, I'm afraid of the-- of the alarm. (LAUGHTER) Yeah, you would freak out.

So what I wanted, so I think it, this is sort of going to come back a little bit to Colombia, but I also as well think it might connect with some of the points that al-- both my colleagues, Antonio and Pablo made about the-- the problem of fake news in the region.

So I think that at this point, most of you have some kind of informed opinion about what's happening in fake news. But at this point, we also are invited to think by O.S.F. and by the Latin America in the drug program about how can we think about this pro-- this problem in the regional context of Latin America? Because we have a lot of information about fake news in the U.S. We have a lot inf-- of information about it in-- in Europe, but we don't have so much information about it in Colombia, in Mexico, in most of the countries of South America. And believe me, it's-- it's a very different thing.

So I invite you to think about this. We were discussing this last night, and sort of I-- I had the idea that I can be organized more or less in this way, which is in infrastructure, platforms and contents, which is the questions that I think you can start thinking about in order to have a different ide-- idea of what's happening with fake news in Latin America.

So the first one is infrastructure, and I'm going to run you two very journal indicators of Colombia, which are very similar to the ones that-- Antonio was showing, which gives you a very interesting idea about how internet is being used in a region, which is different than here in the U.S. or in Europe.

So the first important number is, Colombia has 53% of the population online. This is more or less. Some people say it's a little bit less, some people says it's a little bit more. But let's say this is an accurate indicator. So it's-- we're about 48 million people right now, so that would be 24 million Colombians that are using the internet in Colombia. (THROAT CLEARING) We have a broadband adoption of 46%. So broadband adoption has different measures, depending on the lat-- latency of connections of the speed.

But we can say it's about five or fi-- or f-- 4-- 5-- 6-- megabytes per second. So the-- the definition of broadband varies a lot, because countries want to have a bigger indicator of broadband adoption. But let's say also this is a fair indicator. We have 46% of broadband adoption. We have 104.5% of mobile connections, which is, was the same point that Antonio was making.

Because in our countries, there are more mobile phones than people. Many people have two or three phones. They don't, they, many times they just, they don't use it. They can find, for example, a good offer and buy a phone that's going to have some kind of promotion for a couple of months. And afterwards they are going to buy another one-- and afterward they are going to buy another one. So that's why this indicator is so high.

We have 39-- this what, this where it gets interesting. We have 39.2% of 3G connection. So if you-- if you compare it to the broadband, it doesn't, it starts to-- to-- to look a little bit strange, because this is not a high number. 3G connections is mobile broadband, which it was-- the-- the previous technology to 4G, which is also speeds that are about 3 megabytes per second with-- an average latency and-- and-- and performance of the network.

And we have just 6.7% of 4G connection. So the people using mobile broadband in our countries are really not having, most of them are not having a good experience with their connections. And most of them don't have even these kind of connections. I did want to include here a map so you would see it more-- more deet-- in more detail, but this is a low number by all estimates. But it's a common number in the region. We have 79%, let's say 80% of the people in Colombia are using prepaid data plans. And this is something that connects to what Antonio was saying.

People are using data plans that are offering them some-- apps that are not counting towards their data plan. So there's an incentive to use certain applications in infrastructure of the country. It's driven by what am-- am I going to be offered so I can get WhatsApp for free, so I can get Twitter for free? So that's a very important thing.

People are not using real-- da-- data plans that are-- that I am paying after-- after the bill comes-- at the end of the month. What does this show in terms of infrastructure? We have a very low mobile and broadband pen-- penetration. This-- this means people would rather prefer to see a video that has been downloaded. For example, in WhatsApp somebody sends me a video. I prefer to download it rather than stream it. Because I'm not going-- I'm not going to have a very good connection. And that's-- that's a key issue as well.

I'm going to prepare those things that I'm going to be able to use in a reliable, in a more or less fast way. Voice message. Something that, okay, it's going to download, and meanwhile I'm not going to pay attention. But that's very different from markets like the U.S. where people are looking and consuming a lot of-- live-streaming video.

Lots of mobile phones. That's not a secret. We are-- we are starting to consume online. More than even than tablets, people are using mobile phones. And mostly prepaid data packages. That's what was Antonio saying, zero (?) rating and gatekeeping. So we are having people

that are by the configuration of the infrastructure-- being conduced (SIC) to con-- to consume certain types of applications that are not going to count towards their data plan. The second point. Platforms. And it's of course related to what I'm just saying. This is-- very big survey that-- Ministerio de Comunicaciones did in Colombia, the I.C.T. (PH) Ministry. What, to which of these services are you registered? Everybody's registered to Facebook and WhatsApp. More, almost 90% of the country is registered with those services.

Instagram, Google, Twitter, Skype are way below after that. How frequently do you use them? So daily, Facebook, 80% of the people use Facebook every day. 15% once a week. WhatsApp 93%. "I use-- it every day." So it's a lot of people that are using it. So similar to what Antonio was saying. TV and radio are very important for Colombians. About 60% of Colombians say-- say it's very important for them. Printed press is not important. 33% of the people say, "It's not important for me." I-- it's not, just 33% of the people say it's important, so 67% say "It's not really important."

Digital press is not important. Just 24% say it's important for them. And in low education population, it's even less. Only 16% of the people say, yeah, digital press like the media blog where I write for or the independent outlets there say it's not important for them. They're not consuming their news on digital press.

And one out of ten users are willing to pay for online journalistic content. This is-- number of Argentina from-- a study we had from Oxford that did include Colombia, but that's a number that gives you an idea. It's really very few people compared to what we can see in-- in mec-- in the U.S. or in some countries in Europe who are willing to pay for information. So that's something that, think about the-- think about infrastructure, think about the flat-- the platform, the incentives you have, and what are you really starting, where are you being driven? Or where are you willing to go to consume the information for your daily diet of information?

So wrapping up the second part of-- of platforms. There is a high risk of information diets determined by cost. You are going to end up choosing things that are just-- that are just not going to destroy your budget. And you will say, "Okay, this is okay." This is not very different from the-- from the decisions that people take-- on investing about their information-- diets.

People are not willing to invest much money in information, in public interest information. That's not something that people invest usually on. They invest in a Netflix account, but they don't invest on a *New York Times* subscription. It's something that's-- that-- that's also a common thread in information practices. And there's a high risk of mainstream media being replaced or coupled only with WhatsApp and Facebook. And that's a big question that we have to explore, because WhatsApp does not have the same role in the U.S. public debate as it has it in-- in Colombia.

And one of the big things is, what's the role of WhatsApp in the disinformation practices in the country? So this is the-- the-- the last point of-- of platforms. So let's get into content

where this, every-- everything lands, and that connects with what we were seeing in Marc's documentary.

This is the-- the-- the-- the quote of the manager of the No campaign in the referendum, in the plebiscite that-- that-- that No ended up winning. The next day when they won, which was a very-- very shocking moment for the country, even for them. They were not really prepared to win the-- the referendum. They just, this guy just went, he wa-- he's very close to former president Uribe. He goes to the press. I don't know if he was drunk or what-- what happened with him, but he gave this quote. He said, "The strategy was, stop explaining the agreements and focus instead on the people's indignation. That was the strategy."

And-- and he basically laid it out on an interview. That's what we did. You saw some of the examples in Marc's documentary, and I'm going to show you a couple more. They're captioned. Perhaps you're not going to see them, but I'm going to explain them. So most of what you are going to see are from pastors from different churches in-- in the country-- who-- who played a very important role in driving the vote against the-- the plebiscite.
(VIDEO NOT TRANSCRIBED)

CARLOS CORTÉS:

So tho-- those were like the basic narratives driving the campaign against the plebiscite. Like the gender ideology, they said they were going to enshrine it in the constitution. The fact that they were going to destroy the family, and the fact that it was an agreement by means of which President Santos was going to deliver the country to F.A.R.C.-- with the Socialist-Leninist-- approach.

Which is very difficult to accept, because if-- if you know something about Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos comes from one of the big, elite families in the country. But that something that people actually bought. So that's-- that happened-- that happened-- on two, October 2000-- 2016.

Now we are in the presidential election. And one of the things that I want to show is that we are still in this, the same polarized context. I'm just going to show a couple of examples, because we don't have much time. And it's driven by the same narrative. And now the left is prepared to face that narrative. And as you will see, they are also doing-- good job facing it. So this one is-- (FOREIGN LANGUAGE) is-- tycoon-- cattle tycoon, (FOREIGN LANGUAGE) in Colombia who's very close to the Centro Democratico, the rightwing party. Her (SIC) wife is a senator.

So he says in-- in-- in Twitter, this is-- senator from the left party that just had the election, so he's very close to (FOREIGN LANGUAGE), who's coming second in the-- in the service, in the national service right now. And he says, "God breeds them (?), and they get-- they get-- they get together." The guy that's with the-- the circle hat is-- Rodrigo Londono Timochenko, the guerilla leader that ended up demobilizing because the peace agreement ended up being approved by Congress.

So that was a tweet that he-- he-- he put out on March 26. This is the original photo. This is the photo that he put out. This is (FOREIGN LANGUAGE), the senator. He had a very big-- turnout in the polls for being his first time. He's a first-time senator, and this is the-- and this is the original picture.

The original picture is just-- guy from-- from the coast region that just turns up to take a picture with him and he's supporting Pedro. To the-- to-- I-- I-- I reviewed this-- this morning, and this picture is still tweeted. I told him that it was-- it was a fake picture, and he just, he just, he didn't delete it. It's still there.

And this is like kind of the responses that-- that-- that Petro has also on a very fake news ecosystem. So he tweets to (UNINTEL) it was sun-- this was Sunday morning. I had-- I had, it's very funny, because I had some examples that were interesting for this meeting, but then I had a recent example that was better than the one that I had before. So I changed this one on Sunday morning. And this is Gustavo Petro. He's-- he's a former mayor of Bogota, a former guerilla member from another group that demobilized-- 20 years or 25 years ago.

And he says on Twitter to Ivan Duque, who's a frontrunner from the rightwing Centro Democratico who's ahead in the polls. He says, "You know what? Don't celebrate the paramilitary victories of your followers in my land. They just taste to cocaine and genocide." A very strong tweet. And I was wondering, "Okay, what's the video about?" So this is the video that he's tweeting. You're going to see it in a minute. This is the-- it was Ivan Duque, the presidential candidate. And this is a very well-known singer that's called Poncho Zuleta (PH). So let's have some music.
(VIDEO NOT TRANSCRIBED)

CARLOS CORTÉS:

So he says, "Hail to the paramilitary land. Viva the paramilitaries." If you-- if you check it again, the audio is very clear that it's just a mix-up, but they, he tweeted it-- he tweeted it on his account. And afterwards, he deleted the tweet, but it was just about I don't know 2,000K retweets. It was something that was already moving on WhatsApp. It was a big deal.

And it was just because that (FOREIGN LANGUAGE) singer used to have a re-- or a previous sympathy with paramilitary forces. He's endorsing Ivan Duque, so now Ivan Duque just was receiving his support, and they decided to post the-- the-- the voice saying that they were discussing paramilitary support in that song, which was not real.

So this is the kind of thing that you're seeing now in the social media strategy of Gustavo Petro because he's very, being savvy now to-- to know exactly where-- where he can also put the rightwing on his own. So he's saying, "With Duque just, we are going to war. Duque the rightwing guy that wants to review the-- the agreements, who wants to change some of the things. And with Petro we are going to be running very happy on-- on parks." So some points to finish.

We are seeing a campaign that inherited narratives from the plebiscite. That's just, we are seeing the same thing. And that was a know-how that-- everybody on the political spectrum knows how to implement it now, because they know how people, they're-- they're mentioning peep-- things that are familiar to people. They already know what to, what buttons they can tick. It's a polarized context, but it's nonetheless a very complicated situation, because both right and left candidates are trying to grab space in the center.

They need space in the center in order to go to the-- to the face-off in-- in-- in the-- in the ballot. So it's-- it's a very difficult thing for them as well, because they cannot be seen so rightwing. So, for example, that's the case of Ivan Duque. He cannot be seen as a very radical candidate, because he needs some votes from the center. And the organic content perhaps, and this-- this is a big perhaps, is stronger than targeted advertising. And this is a point that is very important for our region.

When I was working at Twitter-- we had some conversations with people from-- from-- from other companies in the region, and it was not common for the marketing teams of the companies in our countries to have very sophisticated targeted audiences, because we didn't have so much information. So we don't have zip codes in most of the countries.

There-- there are no-- not-- not so many possibilities to classify the audiences, so the targeting mechanism that has Facebook, Twitter might be because that's something that I was looking at with somebody but I don't have like the-- the-- the scientific conclusion might be less-- sa-- sophisticated. And in that case, the organic content is moving much more and is having more influence, which is what we're seeing in WhatsApp. And the final thing, it's some of the road ahead, in case some of you are interested in seeing any opportunities (TIMER RINGS) that we are looking at. Thirty seconds. (LAUGHTER) I couldn't skip the alarm.

We do have great numbers about infrastructure, but we don't have good information about the platforms. We don't know the know-hows. And we don't have information about the practices and the impact. We still have a very basic question, which we are trying to answer with very limited research right now, and it's what's the role of what-- WhatsApp? Is WhatsApp some sort of backend other the campaign? Is-- is like the-- the-- the-- the thing that happens after, the thing that happens before? We really don't know.

The sec-- the second one, fact checking. There are some initiatives of fact checking in the country. It's something that's still not having a very big impact. And the final one. We are working on counter-narratives. One of them is the part that I lead (FOREIGN LANGUAGE) on humor and satire on some of the campaign, trying to address fact checking and different approaches on social media. That's the things that we're working on. Thank you very much. (APPLAUSE)

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Thank you, Carlos. And-- and-- so I think we're gonna shorten the-- the time for questions and answers. We have-- ten minutes to make questions. There are several hands up, so I would just ask you to be as brief as possible, so we can have-- as many questions as possible.

ANNOUNCER:

And please come back here to the mic.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

So-- so-- the-- the microphone is back there, or are you gonna pass the microphone?

CARLOS CORTÉS:

Shall I? Okay.

FEMALE VOICE #1:

First of all, fake new-- fake news by omission. Cambridge Analytica was never talked about when the Democrats controlled it and used it for years, but secondly. There is a way to stop fake news. Whenever you're broadcasting to a minimum amount of people, I don't know what-- hundred, I don't know what it is, you should have to have someone on each side who believes what they say and give each side a chance to give their viewpoint. Then let the people decide.

The third and last thing is, I just read in the *Wall Street Journal* today about Brazil. They say the real reason that they're turning right is because crime is astronomical. They see what's happened in Venezuela. They don't approve of Cuba, and they're becoming conservative.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Okay. We're-- we're gonna-- yes, we're gonna take a question in the back. And I think we'll take these questions, and then we'll give--

MALE VOICE #2:

I will keep it very brief. Antonio. Now we know much more about fake news or propaganda than a year ago. Does transparency solve the problem? Pablo. I-- I was very scared about

the-- the picture that Carlos gave us-- about the chances to use the same strategies to counter-attack this.

And I wonder if in the Brazilian context, is there any issue that will make the Brazilian society to converge? Is that soccer? Is that soap operas? Is that national identi-- ty? Or is it nationalism? And in the case of-- Carlos, what is the role of the local government regarding to foreign platform to, that enable misinformation? Thank you.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Thank you. The-- the next one? Go ahead.

MALE VOICE #3:

Oh, we're not doing answers? We're just asking que--

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Well, I think we're-- we're gonna write down--

MALE VOICE #3:

Oh, okay yeah. Okay, so this question was borne out of something that Marc said about democracies not being very well-equipped to deal with some of the problems we're facing because of technology. But I mean, if we're talking about democracies and, like, some of the core tenets of democracy are, 1) being able to have free and fair elections, 2) having a society that's able to have a conversation with itself and, you know, reach a compromise on something or, 3) you know, have a media that's free of any sort of outside influences.

I mean, Antonio's very worried about government influence in his media. I'm very worried about corporate influence in my media. We all know about Fox News, but I'm sure we've all heard about the Sinclair Broadcasting thing that's been happening recently and the amount of narrative that gets fed into even just local news. And then the gentleman from Brazil is, like, "And also we can't have a public conversation because we're all in our own little echo chambers."

And then Marc comes along and he's like, "Well, just kidding. It doesn't matter at all, because when you get to the electing polls it's not gonna matter 'cause somebody's gonna weaponize all your information against you." Like, just thinking about that makes me want to go to the jungle and do a lot of Ayahuasca or something like that. So like, to what extent is all of, are these problems, like irreversible or reversible, however you want to spin it?

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Thank you.

MALE VOICE #4:

Yeah, hi. Th-- I know that there's a recent-- election in Costa Rica. There was a primary in February, and there's an election just about a month ago. Is anyone on the panel familiar with-- with the events that, I thought it was very interesting election. And secondly, does, there's-- NPR type of-- of radio broadcasting in any of the Latin America countries? I mean, that's one of the basic things that keeps some Americans from falling-- prey to some of the things that you're concerned about. Thank you.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Okay, thank you.

FEMALE VOICE #2:

Hello. When Carlos mentioned about the church in Colombia, my mind came back to our own situation in-- in the United States with the right evangelists and Trump. And remember June 21, 2016, the evangelists anointed Trump. We, I was involved with a demonstration outside the hotel at that time. So we, I would say, we have some similar propaganda going on.

MARC SILVER:

So I don't-- I don't think conceptually it's about this being irreversible. I think that's almost like a fantasy that, it's-- it's-- it's not about irr-- it's not about going backwards. I think-- I think we're not ready to understand like what forms of change and resistance we can have against this, because we don't even understand it.

Like, it's only three weeks ago that the majority of people understood what Facebook means beyond the kind of friendly, likey, surface-level stuff, right? So I-- I mean, yeah, I think the conversations shouldn't be about whether it's reversible. I think the conversation should be about a new way of perceiving self and power in the context of technology and data. And we're not having that conversation, 'cause we're still discussing whether the left do this or the right do that.

It's completely irrelevant, because it's not about left and right politics. It's about, it's just very simply just about power. It's not, it-- it doesn't matter who's-- who, it doesn't matter what your political agenda is anymore in this context.

CARLOS CORTES:

So-- very-- very quickly. On the-- on the one hand, what would be the role of this, of-- of the government, which is a very interesting thing. Because-- Mexico, Antonio in Mexico is doing research on the-- on the fact that this data-- zero-rated plans. I mean, these plans where they offer you some applications for free are being used to-- to get data. In that-- in that sense, and Antonio can say more about that, it's-- it turns out to be of the kind of income that you can have to afford not being, but being just-- having your data scr-- scr-- scraped.

So we have in-- in the-- so in the activism sphere, previous concerns and reasons against those data plans. Mainly because we said, this is just giving people a gate-keeped in-- internet. This is just giving people incomplete access to information. So I think this gives-- gives us a new reason to advocate on behalf of this thing is that we shouldn't allow these data plans to incentivize certain kinds of consumption. And on the other hand, certain kinds of-- of-- of the schemes by means of which they're just taking your information.

And on-- on the secondhand, on the-- on the tactics and on the strategies, that's a very important point. We did some research last year on some related topic about that. And, for example, the gender ideology-- narrative is something that is very well-planned-- in the region. It-- it's been exported to different countries. And it's something that was-- very well-- tapped into in the Colombian debate.

And they used a very isolated thing that happened, which was also a miscalculation of President Santos, ministry of-- of-- of education. And they were able to tap it in-- into the debate. And that was, some people say allegedly, we have to see if that's true, that was one of the key points that-- that switched the vote that was the fact that they were going to enshrine the gender ideology in the constitution by means of the peace agreement.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Thank you, Carlos. And-- Antonio?

ANTONIO MARTÍNEZ VELÁZQUEZ:

Yes. It's unfortunate that-- that-- that I can finish my presentation, be-- because I-- I-- I wa-- I was talking about that. But yes, th-- this-- this research is about Cambridge Analytica and how the-- the tel-cos company-- in the middle of loving the FinTech law. And the FinTech, it's-- it's about is this-- businesses in digital age.

And the optimization of the financial-- environment in Mexico or digitalization of the financial environment in Mexico. These startups from the technology field-- are the users of for, or the contractors for Cambridge Analytica. We will be pub-- publishing this info in-- in a few weeks. But-- but it is very interesting how this-- this-- this companies-- (COUGH) that promote free access to internet or are running the-- the-- the public spots for-- for access to

WiFi in communities below 2,000 and f-- 2,500 people-- are accessing data from those people-- and the websites they visit to profile them, people that are already poor and already excluded from the system.

And they are profiling them to-- to selling them things. Things or politicians. So-- so yes. This is-- this-- this, we will publish this in-- in some-- in-- in-- in few weeks. And-- the-- the-- the question about transparency, well, I don't think it's-- it's-- it-- it's enough. Transparency is one part of that.

To be transparent or to-- to be-- to push the corporations-- I-- I really, in the same frequency as of-- of Marc about, this is about power. And the power is-- this, is displaced from the government to the corporations. So yes, it is about power and it is about-- how they function and how the economic system and digital economic system function. Yes, it is important to-- to-- to-- to say Google and Facebook and Twitter to be transparent about their algorithms and about their-- their contracts with-- with third parties that-- that use our data to make business.

But I don't-- it is a fundamental part, but it is not enough. I mean, I-- I really think that we need to think bigger about it. I-- I think we need to-- in a way expropriate Facebook and make it-- yes, and make it-- public-- public enterprise on-- for every user. I-- I-- I am exploring this in-- in-- in a coming book. But-- but yes. (LAUGHTER)

It is, no, yes, but it is not enough. I mean, what I-- what I want to-- to say is that it's not enough transparency. We need to think bigger about-- our data-- in the-- owned by corporations and ourselves and our rights-- in this-- in those platforms.

PABLO ORTELLADO:

Well. The questions. The-- the answer to the question is, to-- to all the questions is, I don't have no idea. (LAUGHTER) However I have a few things to say. And-- and-- and one-- one of them is that, when we look at the problem that we are facing in our countries, in the U.S., in Europe, in Latin America-- we're passing through-- through the same problems. Our societies are divided, and we're flooded with bad quality information everywhere.

When we look to the people who explain those processes, they're looking to their national history. They're saying, it-- it-- "It's Trump, it-- it's Brexit, it's the Colombian peace process. It's the June 2013 process in Brazil." And so on. But it's not about that. It must be something else. The-- we are being divided over moral issues in-- in a very big way, and we're not having the means to talk to each other and find common ground.

So-- so this is, for me is the big challenge. It has to do with all of us. It hasn't-- has to do with the malicious websites, the political forces who are exploring this-- this division. It has to do with us. So, for example, I don't think it has to do with the platforms, because we know that older people are more divided than young people. And older people use less

internet. In the U.S. we have solid evidence of that. We have in Brazil a lot of-- of empirical evidence showing that.

It's not about-- about education, because more educated people are more divided. So-- so the higher the-- the-- education people have. A college degree, if people have Ph.D.s, the more you're divided. So it has-- it has nothing to do with education. In fact, education-- makes people more divided because they're more sophisticated about the division. And finally-- so-- so the thing is that we're so passionate about those issues that we are really, you know, pushing our societies into a very dangerous situation. And I think the problem is with us. It's not Facebook, it's not the political party, it's about us.

CATALINA PEREZ CORREA:

Well. Thank you, Pablo. And-- and I just wanted to answer-- the gentleman's questions-- that talked about Costa Rica. If you're interested in that, I would recommend-- reading Javier Corrales. He has a piece in the *New York Times*. And he talks about how it's really from the evangelical-- churches that's been-- being pushed-- the-- this idea of-- gender identity and the-- the push against-- L.B.G.T.-- rights.

And-- and it has clear agenda with political purposes. And so-- and-- and it's not only Costa Rica. It's-- it's in Ecuador, Mexico. It's-- it's in, it's throughout the whole continent that we see the same phenomenon. And it's-- and it's funded mainly by the evangelical churches. And it's-- I just wanted to close by-- by saying-- I think from your last comment that we should also-- d-- I mean, there-- there clearly seems to be something where emotions are playing a much more-- more important role than we are paying attention to.

We think it's-- more of a rational choice and-- and rational-- agenda, where you know, em-- emotions are being exploited. And at least, from my position which is a more liberal position, we don't seem to be getting through-- into that, and we're not tapping into those emotions the same way the others-- are doing. And I think that's something that we really need to look into if we want to-- protect these, you know, this agenda, this liberal agenda that I-- I think it's important-- to protect.

And I just want to thank you again all for being here. Thank our panelists for coming all the way-- from their countries or from where they were to here. (APPLAUSE) And finally, to Open Society for-- hosting this-- this-- event for us. Thank you very much.

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *