

**IPSA'S 21ST WORLD CONGRESS OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
RC10 ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY**

**POLITICAL INFORMATION AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE
THROUGH 10 GOVERNMENTAL WEBSITES IN BRAZIL**

HELOISA DIAS BEZERRA, Universidade Federal de Goiás

VLADIMYR LOMBARDO JORGE, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de
Janeiro – PUC/RJ

ABSTRACT: This paper presents some conclusions from the project “Democracy and good governance through governmental websites”¹, about the flow of information and the spaces of direct and indirect interaction between state and civil society. The research involves 10 Brazilian states, two for region, comparing greater GDP/minor GDP. The main hypothesis is that investment in digital convergence, unaccompanied by a change into a political comportment, does not guarantee the superior accomplishment of political accountability and the responsiveness, consequently the empowerment of individuals and groups and the good governance. The governmental conception of citizen is one of the obstacles because government dialogues primordially with individuals that pay taxes or that need social support (social assistance). On the other side, the process of digital convergence bring together a lot of new questions: 1) what kind of information could be more interesting if governments intend are to improve civil society (individuals, groups) into the political game; 2) if in this process, governments are offering to civil society enough tolls that will permit citizens check de politics and, at the same time, express your preferences before/during the process of political buildings/decision makers; 3) if digital convergence provides an effective means of government communication and information supplementing traditional models that not consider the importance of political participation by citizens. The last question is if digital convergence is changing the traditional pattern of interaction between governments and civil society, especially in relation to the horizontal controls from society to state.

KEY-WORDS: internet; democracy; good governance; individual empowerment; accountability

¹ “**Democracia e boa governança via websites dos governos estaduais**”, project financed by CNPq, Process 567742/2008-3, Edital 06/2008, Jovens Pesquisadores.

I. Introduction

The distance between representatives and those being represented and the cost of political information are pointed as hindrances to the active participation of citizens in political life. One supposes that they would constitute a constant threat to the stability of democracy, both in countries that have consolidated democracies and those that are on the path for such. With emerging information and communication technologies (TICs) such as the Internet, cellular phones and other devices, experts retake the debate over new perspectives for democracy, taking as parameters certain questions on the how they will impact the political, democratic environment.

According to Silva (2005), most researchers admit the communicative potentialities of TICs. There are, however, divergences about the kind and the intensity of this impact. In the absence of better terminology, these researchers can be divided in three groups: “optimists”, “moderates” and “pessimists”. He states that not all analysts regard the consequences of TICs in a positive way. Bezerra (2008) reclassified researchers from the political theory perspective, which is adopted in this paper and in our research.

[...] I named them “rousseauian cyber optimists” and “schumpeterian cyber pessimists”. The first ones related to the perception that the new TICs constitute a surprising path for new interaction patterns in a democratic environment, advances which could supposedly be observed, both in the posture of politicians and bureaucrats and in the citizens themselves, joining either deliberationist or participative ideals. Schumpeterian cyber pessimists, on the other hand, did not believe in the incremental possibility of TICs concerning political participation, due to the apathy that is almost inherent to individuals, daily harassed by the needs and pleasures of everyday life. Within this perspective, political participation is closely related to the way individuals perceive the public world – politics and rulers - as an unfamiliar thing since it differs from the several questions with which individuals need to interact and which basically have to do with the private world. (Bezerra, 2008, p.2)

The above-mentioned classification reflects the present debate between different democracy models: representative democracy, originated in the gradual expansion of the electoral body achieved after the adoption of universal suffrage, participative democracy and semi-direct democracy. If the first one reduces political participation to the act of choosing representatives in free and honest elections, the second one amplifies participation through the use of institutions that allow citizens to interfere directly in the deliberative process. Defenders of the second model believe that its use help approximate public policies to the citizens' real interests. Whichever the democracy model adopted, TICs constitute

fundamental resources, both for public management and for the approximation state-society. They allow the rapid and easy access to necessary information to non-governmental organizations, opposition political parties and interested journalists in the attempt to monitor the public power or citizens themselves when convoked to deliberate directly about a certain question.

For Malina (1999), Schmidtke (1998) e Coleman (1999a and 1999b), TICs would be marked by its ambiguous nature and its use for beneficial political purposes depend, especially, on the way it is socially borrowed; on the other hand, Dean (1997), Buchstein (1997) and Wolton (2001) see more of its negative effects than its positive consequences or ambiguity (*apud* Silva, 2005, p. 452).

Concerning divergences that analysts have on the repercussion intensity, optimists support predominantly the idea that the large scale use of TICs would allow for the meaningful transformation of political-social relations. This vision is rather in tune with the idea of a “digital revolution” or the rising of an “information society” (Silva, 2005, p. 452-3). Moderates restrict such transformations to the level of a rearrangement of the liberal democratic system, admitting important repercussion, but not so meaningful to the point of sharing the idea of a “revolution” (Silva, 2005, p.453).

Besides such different perspectives on the political potentialities of TICs, there are also different discourses that dispute the cyberspace model of democracy. Silva indicates three predominant segments: liberal-individualist, communitarist and deliberationist, which differ in relation to their respective understandings of democratic legitimacy. For individualists, democracy obtains legitimacy when it supplies expression to interests of the individual; for communitarists, a democratic model is legitimated since it enhances communal spirit and values; deliberationist, on their turn, understand that a democratic model is legitimated by the facilitation of public sphere’s rational discourse (Dahlberg, 2001, p. 158, *apud* Silva, 2005, p. 453).

Considering that the debate over the political use of TICs in the contemporary democratic system presents a variation of visions on the promises and the kind of existence of a democracy mediated by technological artifacts, Silva observes that the expression “digital democracy” refers to distinct experiences, though democratic. For him, this variation in meaning can be thought from the perception of the existence of five non-excluding degrees of civil society’s democratic participation in the processes of political decision production suggested by Gomes (2004b).

Those five degrees of digital democracy vary between opposite poles of very low participation (first degree), in which citizens limit themselves to receiving information or making use of services made available by the government and another (fifth degree), in which citizens replace their political representatives in the decision production (Silva, 2005, p. 454-457). Although, in principle, one degree of digital democracy does not necessarily exclude nor include the others, a project can occupy an intermediate position between two degrees, leaning towards one under one aspect, and toward the other under another aspect. Silva also emphasizes that “the perception of some of those degrees in the implementation of digital democracy needs a careful look: the existence of elements of a certain degree does not mean that a democracy in fact exists. It means that there are indications of “(non-determining) grades of a democratic ideal mediated by communication and information technologies” [...] (Silva, 2005, p. 457).

In the research that originated this paper, we took as premise the centrality of the good governance concept, which, according to specialized literature, is a strong indication of the democratization relation between representatives and those being represented and the efforts of the executive branch of governmental powers toward the empowerment of civil society. Considering that this occurs especially because of the availability of enough adequate information to enable citizens to demand policies and to monitor the performance of politicians, in this research we investigate if, how and how much the executive branch:

- a) Allows individuals, pressure groups and other institutions (the media, political parties, NGOs etc.) the access to enough adequate information for them so that they can exert some kind of horizontal or vertical control;
- b) Offers mechanisms which allow individual, groups and other institutions to directly or indirectly interact, expressing their preferences on public actions and policies under development or which have been developed;
- c) Considering (a) and (b), in which levels the executive branch, joining digital convergence and thus favoring the Internet as means of information and interactivity with society, are practicing political accountability and the essential responsiveness to the so-called good governance.

Therefore, in this paper we intend to share the following research problems: 1) the construction of an adequate methodology to the problematization of aspects of the so-called electronic democracy, especially the participation in the decision process; 2) what kind of information is more favorable to the empowerment of civil society, both of individuals and groups; 3) if digital convergence points to an effective transformation of traditional political

relation between representatives and those being represented, government and citizen, which means an increment in representative democracy of something we could call self-representation, since it would not depend on representatives of any kind, whether it pertains to the political sphere or to organized civil society itself (we present this discussion without taking into consideration normative or value aspects related to representative democracy quality or to self-representation); 4) how the Internet can alter the relations state-society-state concerning the possibilities of the so-called horizontal controls.

II. Representative democracy: limits and new perspectives

In spite of the fact that the occurrence of periodical, free and clean election is a necessary requisite for democracy to exist, this criterion is insufficient and many political scientists use others, besides elections, in order to identify a democratic country. However, as they amplify their definition of democracy, they exclude a variety of questions. Mainwaring *et. alli* (2001), for example, do not consider social rights and accountability necessary requisites to the definition of democracy. In spite of those exclusions, the populations of countries in democratization processes are likely to have optimistic expectations in relation to their social-economical situation. However, democracies have limitations and, as those expectations do not happen completely, they tend to generate frustration.

For Latin-Americans, the re-democratization of their countries was not limited solely by the end of the authoritarian regime. It also meant economic development followed by income redistribution, social equity and reduction of regional asymmetries. The inability of democratically elected governments to promote such improvements generated frustrations that got reflected on the perception that citizens have of their political institutions.² As those governments not only demonstrated their inability to satisfactorily respond to those demands, but also adopted economic policies which worsened the situation still more, liberal democratic institution entered crisis, which led to an increase of political instability in several countries of the region.³ Brazil was an exception since none of the political and economical crises faced by the country represented a threat to the survival of the regime. This allows us to say that, since the 80's, Brazil lived its longest and most stable period of democratic experience.

² See Power and Jamison, 2005.

³ It's ironic that, after the third democratic wave, which was broader than the previous ones (1828-1926 e 1943-1962), democratic political institutions had entered crisis in many countries of Latin America (Huntington, 1993 e 1994).

However, in spite of the country's political stability, Brazilians share with other Latin-Americans a great mistrust of their political institutions. This is a symptom of the crisis that the political institutions of the region had to go through.⁴

The limitations of representative democracies in social areas, as well as frustrations in relation to the performance of their institutions, have stimulated not only criticism to that kind of democracy, but also the promotion of a model which will allow the direct participation of citizens. Although they do not propose the complete elimination of representative democracy, such limitations stimulate leftist critics to propose a deliberative or participative democracy in the local level or jointly, operating together with representative democracy⁵.

In order for them to have more control over their representatives or decide on some issue (in an election, a plebiscite, a referendum or legislative veto), individual citizens or civil society institutions (NGOs, trade unions etc) need more information besides what was made available by the traditional media (newspapers, radio and television). Even in representative democracies, which do not demand active citizenship, for the opposition and journalists to effectively play their role as "democracy watchdog", they need that public institutions make information they have available.

Bearing in mind the relevance that information has in the context of a representative democracy or a democracy with elements of semi-direct democracy (for example, deliberative or by self-representation) and the role that the Internet plays in information dissemination, we elected as object of study the sites of Brazilian states' executive branches (more precisely governors' offices and state secretariats), aiming at verifying the amount and the kind of information offered by the Internet.

II.1 Digital Democracy in Brazil

Since the 1980's, Brazil has been living its longest and most stable democratic experience. Public opinion researches, however, show that, in spite of such credit balance, political mistrust is excessively high in the country. Because of that, politicians and the civil society discuss what to do in order to transform this situation; what to do in order to make the *res publica* more accessible to the ordinary man; how to minimize the abuse of public resources and hinder the embezzlement of such resources by individuals or private groups

⁴ Besides an increase in the mistrust, other symptoms pointed by the literature are: the disappearance or weakening of traditional political parties in some countries and some of the items of the political reforms that almost all countries of the region promoted between 1984 e 2007.

⁵ See Santos e Avritzer, 2005 about that.

(patrimonialism), how to allow common citizens to exert a more effective control over their representatives (Jorge, 2009, p.15). Institutional changes have been proposed in an effort to strengthen republican and liberal democratic traditions. In parallel to that, the National Congress has examined bills proposing changes in current legislation aiming at increasing citizens' political participation and their control over their representatives in the legislative and executive branches ⁶ (Jorge, 2009, p. 15). Nevertheless, in spite of such proposals whose goal is to intensifying the direct participation of Brazilian citizens, we should see them as part of the political reform proposal. Our reformers base themselves on the premise that it is necessary to keep participation of citizens low, and semi-direct or participative democracy institutes idle. (Jorge, 2005, p.2)

Low stimulus to political participation is also perceived in Brazilian government websites of capital cities. Silva noticed that, in those websites, availability of information, as well as the offer of public services to citizens is a kind participation that is in the process of consolidation and, in spite of that, has predominantly an informative character: elements of services offer appear in smaller quantity and are directed predominantly to the relation between treasure secretariat and tax payers (Silva, 2005, p. 458). Besides, he also verified that almost half of analyzed capital cities governments “[...] do not worry about keeping an efficient direct communication channel with soliciting citizen” (Silva, 2005, p. 459-460).

Silva concludes that state government sites offer “[...] little transparency, little accountability and practically no permeability to the public opinion from the part of the state, which would potentially make use of TICs (specifically the Internet) in order to improve citizens' participation in public businesses” (Silva, 2005, p. 463). The means that would allow citizens to exert effective participation in the definition process of public policies are completely absent from web portals of Brazilian capital cities governments. Although, according to Silva, in some websites there is information on deliberation processes by means

⁶ In spite of the fact that there is a great deal of resistance to the direct participation of Brazilian citizens, there are bills in the National Congress which amplify popular participation. Bill 4.718/2004, from the Participative Legislation Commission, regulates the use of institutes (plebiscite, referendums and popular initiative bills) established by article 14 of the Federal Constitution. Aiming at introducing recall and popular veto to the Brazilian Federal Constitution, Proposal to Constitutional Amendments (PEC) n. 80 and 82 have been presented. The first one, presented by senator Antonio Carlos Valadares (PSB-CE), proposes changes in article 14 of the Constitution: the insertion of two clauses that, if accepted, will introduce in Brazil the right to recall and popular veto. The second one was presented in 2003 by senator Jefferson Peres (PDT-AM). This amendment proposes changes in articles 28, 29, 32, 55 and 82 of the Constitution aiming at “preparing a plebiscite for confirmation of people's representatives in majority elections”. In 2005, senator Eduardo Suplicy (PT-SP) presented a project, which alters clauses in articles 14 and 49 of the Federal Constitution and adds article 14-A to the text. Senator Pedro Simon (PMDB-RS) also presented a PEC, which will, if it passes, institute the revocation of elective mandates in the executive as well as in the legislative branches if (Jorge, 2005, p. 13-14).

of the so-called Participative Budget, “there are no references on the use of TICs or the Internet as means of communication in to order to make viable citizens’ participation in this deliberative mechanism” (Silva, p. 464).

Silva’s conclusion in relation to the political participation degree offered by state governments corroborates, therefore, our verifications that the proposals of political reforms in Brazil are aimed solely at strengthening traditional institutions of representative democracies (political parties, legislative branch etc.) reducing citizens’ participation in electoral seasons. Besides, those websites do not offer information that allows the media and NGOs to monitor governmental actions.

Making use of a distinct methodology and previewing a less ambitious use for TICs, Braga (2006; 2007) has an optimistic perception in relation to the future of TICs, not only in Brazil, but also in all South America. Braga verified that the Brazilian legislative branch, the National Congress, is ranks among those “with high degree of information [...] as well as the sites of Peru’s and Venezuela’s unicameral legislative branches, which places a relatively ample series of resources at the reach of the researcher and the ordinary citizen on several dimensions of their decision making process” (Braga, 2007, p 32).

Although he verified that several South-American websites present deficiencies in making available information about the legislative process, as well as information from the government to the civil society, which he attributed to the low degree of institutionalization of some countries’ parliamentary democracies, he concluded that national legislative branches of the region

[...] present reasonably high levels of information, offering researches and the average citizen innumerable resources for getting acquainted with their legislative process and the government. One notes, therefore, a meaningful effort toward the availability of information by parliamentary organs. We consider such process to be simultaneous to the consolidation of parliamentary democracies in the region. This makes us foresee a future scenario quite diverse from those who previewed the spread of “delegative democracies” throughout the continent. On the contrary, what one notices is a consistent search for more transparency on the functioning of parliamentary organs and South-American politicians’ behavior. TICs are auxiliary instrument of fundamental importance in the process (Braga, 2007, p. 32-33).

Braga foresees a less ambitious use of TICs because he does not see them as a way to introduce a new democracy model, semi-direct democracy or participative, which would demand other resources besides those offered in the present⁷. On the contrary, he understands it as a way to perfect representative democracies, because he sees the overcoming of south-American websites’ deficiencies as “an important dimension of the effort toward the

institutionalization and improvement of parliamentary democracy in the South-American continent” (Braga, 2007, p.33).

II.2. Information via the web, accountability and political responsiveness

Political accountability has been indicated as one of the main democratization tools for political activity, especially governmental one. One believes that data availability, especially those conducted by the institutions, can increment the public sphere and, as a consequence, retrospective evaluation capacity for individuals and groups. It is believed that the mere fact of making information accessible guarantees more quality to democracy, which would indicate little relevance for deliberationist claims.

One aspect of the debate deals with the reduction of accountability, replaced by financial transparency since it is a meaningful element for the fight against corruption and for democratization of political relations themselves. The remaining question is whether the government renders account well is he fully exercising what is expected from political accountability. This question sends us to a second set of problems: how to exercise political accountability without making use of propaganda directed to political-electoral persuasion of the interest of the group in power? The third set of problems concerns the format of rendering political account, since certain parameters for retrospective evaluation would certainly collide with old dilemmas of representative democracy: electors can charge campaign promises or the representative has the right and the duty to amplify his action also favoring defeated minorities: the individual and the groups that supported and/or voted in defeated candidates? (Manin *et. Alli*, 2006). As a conclusion, what would relevant information be? What could be indicated as quality political accountability?

A question that seems meaningful to us is how to correlate the three dimension of the political practice in a participative democracy: technical-administrative information (or rational-legal in weberian terms), responsiveness⁷ (Dahl. 1997) and accountability concerning formulation, implementation and evaluation process of public policies related to aspects of citizenship.

⁷ Participative democracy does not necessarily mean the complete elimination of political representation. It can be conceived, according to Santos and Avritzer, in two ways: representative democracy on national level can coexist with participative democracy on the local level or one admits that the institutes of direct democracy can replace part of the process of representation and deliberation of liberal democracy (Santos e Avritzer, 2005, p. 75-76).

In this case, for the sake of methodological questions, we separate the aspects merely informative from deliberationist episodes, not only locating the decision process within the boundaries of the elected representation, but also attributing meaningful importance to information sharing during the period of formulation, implementation and evaluation of such policies, possibly with the political agents' responsive behavior.

The set of information made available everyday by governmental institutions accompanied by interaction devices gets relevance. Preliminary, it seems to be a good indication of public sphere resonance and/or the organized civil society before constituted powers, considering that a representative democracy, citizens supposedly hope to count on the work of representative legally elected in order to find adequate solution to problems that arise during their terms and that society's participation is well resolved when circumscribed to electoral processes and possible thematic consultation by means of referendums and plebiscites. Theorists of deliberative democracy and of the broadening of citizens' participation in decision making processes believe that the limits of the representative models put a cast in individuals' creativity and preferences.

However, if responsiveness is indeed an indicator of democracy, it is relevant that public organs create mechanisms for the citizen to express his preferences. The great question is if there really are representatives interested in formulating policies according to the preferences manifested via open mechanisms of popular consultation and if activists of the 21st century, especially the great majority that frequent the Internet, are interested in participating in the decision processes tied by the ropes of the state and the interests of institutionalized public actors, including those originated in organized social movements.

Brazil has continental dimensions and, since 1889, is a federative republic. The country is made up of 26 federation units called states, besides the Federal District (Brasilia). They are scattered in five regions. Demographic and wealth distribution among federation units and regions, however, has never been egalitarian. There are, therefore, strong asymmetries among the units of the federation. The existence of such asymmetries leads to the following question: do investments in digital convergence necessarily mean practicing political accountability and responsiveness of superior quality and, as a consequence, the concretization of some of the fundamental political-administrative requisites for the practice of good governance?

Our hypothesis is that the answer to this question is a negative one. That is, there is not a direct relation between investment in digital convergence and the practice of political accountability and responsiveness of superior quality. In order to test this hypothesis, we have been analyzing web portals of the executive branch in ten states. We have selected two states

per region and considered the greater GDP⁸/minor GDP asymmetries. Those web portals, objects of this research, include the websites of the governor's offices and of states secretariats⁹ totaling 214 websites: 10 websites of governor's offices and 204 websites of secretariats.

Chart 1: Units of the Federation with greater or minor GNPs

Region	Unit of the Federation and its GNP	
	with greater GNPs in the region	with minor GNPs in the region
North	Para	Roraima
Northeast	Bahia	Piauí
Center-West	Goiás	Mato Grosso do Sul
Southeast	São Paulo	Espírito Santo
South	Rio Grande do Sul	Santa Catarina

Source: IBGE, Contas Regionais do Brasil 2002-2005, issued in December/2007.

III. Methodological considerations¹⁰

As every emerging research area, there is a great need for methodologies. This is so because we are dealing with something that, at the same time, is research source and research object. Besides that, it can also be accessible or not, seasonal or occasional according to managers, after all, the Internet is a virtual, non-physical, space which can be altered completely in seconds.

We consider two discussion issues as priorities, both concerning the availability of political information via the Internet: 1) informational asymmetry which harms individuals who do not have access or who have little access to the Internet; 2) the absence or low-quality interaction devices between representatives and those being represented, which, *per se*, contributes to the distancing of individuals and groups from processes that are inherent to the public sphere. Therefore, in this research, we took as object of study verifying if and how state governors make use of TICs and if they offer some kind of interaction device, as well as to analyze the information quality and the interaction device made available. Based on such goals, we consider relevant to work with a methodology which will allow us to problematize some of the relevant democratization dimensions of the relations between political institutions and the civil society.

⁸ Gross National Product

⁹ The website of the executive branch includes the website of the governor's office and state secretariats.

¹⁰ The chart model originated in other researches carried out especially by Silva, 2005; Braga, 2006 and 2007 and Noris, 2001.

Considering the centrality of the concept of good governance, which includes accountability and responsiveness and considers fundamental the efforts of executive branches concerning the empowerment of civil society by offering adequate and sufficient information to enable citizens to demand policies and to monitor politicians' performance (Bezerra, 2008), we problematize the variables about the following questions: 1) Do state executive branches allow individuals, groups and other institutions (the media, political parties, workers' unions, NGOs etc) the access to sufficient and necessary information for them to exert horizontal or vertical control? 2) Do executive branches of states allow individual, groups and other institutions to interact directly or indirectly and thus express their preferences concerning public policies and actions developed or under development? In summary, we dimensioned two macro-categories as the variable starting point: 1) political accountability and vertical and horizontal controls; 2) direct or indirect interaction and governmental responsiveness.

At this moment, we are working with the perspective of making use of approximately 100 variable distributed among eight dimensions (see Chart 2). We understand that accountability and interaction demand that websites of state executive branches contain, besides of instruction which will help visitor do obtain information about the executive branch (governor's offices, secretariats and respective members), about laws (bills in general and those concerning the national budget, auditors or ombudsmen, public competitive examinations, professional training and contracts with service or products suppliers. Besides contents, websites must allow visitors to access the other government branches (pertaining both to states and cities), the governments' official publications, and the public auditors, instead of simply supplying information and allowing the access to other branches and government organs, which should enable visitors to interact with those institutions.

Observe that, with those variables we can verify if state governors offer citizens a certain degree of participation. That is, if it limits itself to offering general information and some kind of service aimed at facilitating certain administrative relation with the citizen, especially with the taxpayer citizen, or, if, beyond that, it allows citizen to communicate with members the executive branches and other citizens, thus constituting a virtual public space. These spaces occur in forums, chats and a collection of forums and chats which have taken place (see chart 2, the fifth dimension: "Relation with the public or contact with the citizens members of the executive branch.")

Chart 2: Dimensions and variables¹¹

Dimensions	Variables
Accessibility (initial page)	Search devices, map of the site, access to the institution's organizational charts e-mail address and/or 'talk to us' for contact, statistics of access, glossary of political or technical terms, sizeable letters (fonts), links to the governor's office, secretariats and other state organs, links to bills being discusses, links to decision processes open to public consultation, timetable of governor/secretary, updated news, subscription to newsletter from the governor's officer and secretariats.
Information about the executive branch	competencies of institution/organ, mission of institution, history of institution/organ, management strategic plan, annual government plan, administration goal, composition of executive branch/secretariat, information on previous administration, full text of public policies in process of implementation or evaluation, full text of government actions being implemented or evaluated.
Information about the members of the executive branch (governors and secretaries)	Mini-curriculum vitae with political-administrative records, asset declaration, full text of material resulting from participation in public inquiries.
Relations with the legislative branch	Bills sent to the legislative branch, bills approved by legislative branch, partial or total vetoes to bills approved by the legislative branch, vetoes of the executive branch put down by the legislative branch, state constitution in PDF or doc formats, federal constitution in PDF or doc formats, state laws in PDF or doc formats, budgets laws or amendments, budgets discussions, budget implementation of executive branch, full text of budget, commented budget.
Relation with the public; information	Auditors or similar ones; contacts for denunciation; summary of auditors actions; seminars held by auditors; auditor's final reports; sound files of events; web radio broadcastings; radio programs; web TV broadcastings; TV programs; informative bulletins; link to communication agencies; announcements of books and documents being edited; regular periodicals (electronically or in PDF); full text of publications; clipping service; information or publication coordination; news service release of relevant project; participative legislation/budget; subscription to e-mail news; registration on line for events; commented reports of public policies projects and other actions of the government; collection of documents of previous administration, especially technical reports; budget reports; public policies and governmental actions; respective final evaluation of final use of blogs, you tube, Twister and other kinds of interaction.
Interaction with the public and decision making process	Availability of texts related to formulation processes of public policies; availability of projects/goals for governmental actions; public consultations; public invitation to individuals and groups specialized in specific themes, collection of forums and chats on specific themes; non-thematic chats and forums; forms for contacts, suggestions, complaints etc; forms for the performance evaluation of government and secretariats performance.
Administrative transparency	Information on public service competitive examinations, profession training program; list of suppliers; contracts; official announcements of bids; bids in development; previous finished bids; system for the monitoring of bids; expenses and revenues of the executive branch; report of the institution's fiscal management
Links to other organs of interest	federal government; other state governments; municipal governments, legislative branch; Tribunal of State Accounts; public attorneys , judiciary branch/tribunals; states' official journals.

¹¹ Variables and dimensions are in pre-testing phase and evaluation aimed at a final model

In order to evaluate the websites that allow individual and institutions to exert horizontal and vertical accountability, as well as express their preferences, it is necessary to verify if the information and direct and indirect interaction devices, especially the important ones, are in the web portal of the state executive branch and if they can indeed be accessed and if they are sufficient, that means, if they are not incomplete. However, as Braga (2006; 2007), reminds: “[...] not all variables have the same weight [...], which forces the researcher to define a pondering factor for the variable scoring points. In relation to this, we also intend to make use of the criterion formulated by Braga to decide on variable scoring points, since, like him, we intend to develop a qualitative analysis and not a quantitative one, which we would only deal with the number of websites. Chart 3 shows the weight which we attributed to each peace of information.

Chart 3: Criteria for the scoring of websites

Information	Evaluation		
	Complete and/ or satisfactory information (C)	Incomplete and/or unsatisfactory information (I)	Without information (O)
Important and essential	20 to 50	15 to 25	0
Important, but not essential	10 to 20	5 to 15	0
Less important	1 to 10	1 to 5	0

Fonte: Braga, 2007: 12.

The uneven scoring of each one of the variable, according to Braga, reflects functionality and the importance given to the access of the individuals and/or institutions to information about the state executive branch. Based on the scoring showed in Chart 3, we established a number of highest score for each variable between 0 and 50.

The second phase of the research will me constituted of (1) state secretaries interviews dealing with communication, citizenship and the like and (2) technical personnel responsible for replying/reacting to those who make use of the website to get in contact with the governor’s office or any other secretariat. We will use semi-structured interviews, taking into account that some questions will be previously delimited as a result of the websites’ analysis. Among other questions, we are interested in knowing the expectation of the executive branch members in relation to chats and forums in existence in the institution’s page.

IV. Final considerations

With the emergence of TICs, specialists retook the debate on new perspectives for democracy. This debate will involve the kind and the intensity of repercussion of technology in the actors' behaviors and vice-versa. There are the "optimists" or, whom we prefer to call "rousseauian cyber optimists", who believe that TICs paves the way in order to overcome representative democracy's limitations, turning effective what, until then, were only deliberationist or participative ideals. "Schumpeterian cyber pessimists" are more realistic in relation to the use and the consequences of TICs by governments, since they do now agree with the evaluation that TICs will bring meaningful changes concerning collective participation. With such arguments, this debate is an unfolding of another, "older" one on representative democracy and of its variation, participative democracy. However, our argument is that, whatever the democracy model, TICs are a fundamental resource for the citizen, NGOs, political parties, the media and other state institutions because they supply fast, easy access to any necessary information.

We also observed that there are divergences between theorists concerning the legitimacy of democracy. Individuals believe that democracy happens due to the space that is made available to individuals to express their individual interests; for communitarists there is the possibility of enhancing communal values and interests; finally, deliberationists say that it originates in the facilitation of rational discourse in the public sphere.

Because of the many visions on TICs, and the fact that there are distinct non-excluding degrees of democratic participation of civil society in the political decision production processes, we worked with the perspective of evaluating whether a larger investment in digital convergence would contribute for a meaningful change in the profile of the Brazilian state, especially concerning interaction and participation possibilities of individuals/groups in the processes of public consultation.

I. Bibliographic references

BEZERRA, Heloisa Dias. Atores políticos, informação e democracia. *OPINIÃO PÚBLICA*, Campinas, vol. 14, n° 2, Novembro, 2008, p.414-431. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/op/v14n2/06.pdf>. Último acesso: 05/04/2009.

BRAGA, Sérgio. Podem as novas tecnologias de informação e comunicação auxiliar na consolidação das democracias? Um estudo sobre a informatização dos órgãos legislativos na América do Sul. *Opinião Pública*, Campinas, vol. 13, n.º 1, Junho, 2007, p.1-50.

_____. Internet e Política: um estudo sobre a informatização dos órgãos legislativos na América do Sul. In: III Congresso da ALACIP/Associação Latino-americana de Ciência Política, *Anais do III Congresso da ALACIP* (CD-Rom). Campinas: Unicamp, Campinas, 2006, p. 1-29.

BUCHSTEIN, H. Bytes that bite: the internet and deliberative democracy. *Constellations*, v. 4, n. 2, p. 248-263, 1997. [Links]

- COLEMAN, S. Cutting out the middle man: from virtual representation to direct deliberation. In: HAGUE, B.; LOADER, B. D. (org.). *Digital democracy: discourse and decision making in the information age*. London: Routledge, 1999a.
- DAHL, Robert A. (1997) *Poliarquia*. São Paulo: Edusp (original, 1972). [Caps. 1-4].
- DAHLBERG, L. Democracy via cyberspace: mapping the rhetorics and practices of three prominent camps. *New media & society*, v. 3, n. 2, p. 157-177, 2001.
- DEAN, J. Why the net is not a public sphere. *Constellations*, v. 10, n. 1, p. 95-112, 2003.
- GOMES, W. Ciberdemocracia: possibilidades e limites. 2004. Conferência Inaugural do II Congresso Ibérico de Comunicação, Covilhã, Portugal (Inédito), 2004b.
- HUNTINGTON, Samuel P. **A terceira onda**. A democratização no final do século XX. São Paulo: Ática, 1994.
- _____. Democracy's third wave. In: DIAMOND, Larry e PLATTNER, Marc F. **The global resurgence of democracy**. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.
- JORGE, Vladimyr Lombardo. Reflexões sobre a democracia na Venezuela e no Brasil. **Desigualdade & Diversidade** – Revista de Ciências Sociais da PUC-Rio, n. 4, jan.-jun. 2009. (no prelo)
- LAVALLE, Adrián Gurza; HOUTZAGER, Peter P.; CASTELLO, Graziela. Democracia, pluralização da representação e sociedade civil. *Lua Nova*, São Paulo, 67: 49-103, 2006. Último acesso: 05/03/2009.
- MALINA, A. Perspectives on citizen democratization and alienation in the virtual public sphere. In: HAGUE, B.; LOADER, B. D. (org.). *Digital democracy: discourse and decision making in the information age*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- MANIN, Bernard; PRZEWORSKI, Adam; STOKES, Susan S. Eleição e representação. *Lua Nova*, São Paulo, 67:105-138, 2006. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ln/n67/a05n67.pdf>. Último acesso: 05/03/2009.
- MAINWARING, Scott; BRINKS, Daniel; PEREZ-LINAN, Aníbal. Classificando Regimes Políticos na América Latina, 1945-1999. **Dados**, Rio de Janeiro, vol. 44, n.º 4, 2001, págs. 645 a 687.
- PITKIN, Hanna Fenichel. Representação: palavras, instituições e idéias. *Lua Nova*, São Paulo, 67:15-47, 2006. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ln/n67/a03n67.pdf>. Último acesso: 05/03/2009.
- POWER, Timothy J. e JAMISON, Giselle D. Desconfiança política na América Latina. *Opinião Pública*, março 2005, vol.11, n.º 1, págs. 64 a 93.
- NORRIS, Pippa. *Digital divide?: civic engagement, information poverty, and the Internet Worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa e AVRITZER, Leonardo. Introdução. Para ampliar o cânone democrático. In: SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa (org.). **Democratizar a democracia: os caminhos da democracia participativa** (3ª ed.). Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2005.
- SILVA, Sivaldo Pereira. Graus de participação democrática no uso da internet pelos governos das capitais brasileiras. *Opin. Publica*, Campinas, v. 11, n. 2, Oct. 2005.
- URBINATI, Nadia. O que torna a representação democrática? *Lua Nova*, São Paulo, 67:15-47, 2006. pp.191-228. Disponível em: <http://www.scielo.br/pdf/ln/n67/a07n67.pdf>. Último acesso: 05/03/2009.
- WOLTON, D. *E depois da Internet? Para uma teoria crítica dos novos mídias*. Algés: Difel, 2001.