Parlamento 2020 es un ejercicio de visión llevado a cabo por la Sociedad Hansard en varios países. El objetivo del proyecto es explorar cómo las tecnologías nuevas y emergentes se usan o podrían ser utilizadas para transformar los procesos parlamentarios y, en particular, su relación con el público. En la parte chilena de este proyecto, se realizó una serie de grupos focales semi-estructurados en persona y de entrevistas semi-estructuradas con las partes interesadas del Congreso Nacional de Chile, incluyendo a parlamentarios, funcionarios parlamentarios y miembros del público. El proyecto tenía como objetivo explorar cómo estos distintos grupos preveían un futuro parlamento en Chile, equipado con y apoyado por las tecnologías digitales y explorar de qué manera los medios digitales podrían transformar la forma de interacción entre los representantes elegidos y los ciudadanos.

Parliament 2020 is a visioning exercise undertaken by the Hansard Society in a number of countries. The project is intended to explore how new and emergent technologies are being or could be used to transform the processes of parliament and, in particular, its relationship with the public. In the Chilean part of this project, we conducted a number of semi-structured face-to-face focus groups and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from the Chilean National Congress, including parliamentarians and parliamentary officials, and with members of the public. The aim of this project was to explore how these different groups envisaged a future parliament in Chile that was enabled and supported by digital technologies and how digital media might transform the way elected representatives interact with citizens.

The Hansard Society is the UK’s leading independent, non-partisan political research and education charity. We aim to strengthen parliamentary democracy and encourage greater public involvement in politics. Since 1997 the Digital Democracy Programme has led the way in understanding how digital media affect and transform the way democracy works. From the internet’s impact on parliament, to better government engagement with citizens and the potential for civil society to harness digital media, our thought-leading research has been a formative part of an emergent digital Britain. Our work is about democratic innovation. Focusing on online political communication and citizen engagement, we explore the many faces of digital inclusion, citizen engagement, political campaigning and parliamentary process.

Report on the National Congress of Chile
Informe sobre el Congreso Nacional de Chile

Freddy Fallon, Chris Kendall and Andy Williamson
Acknowledgements

Report authors: Freddy Fallon, Chris Kendall and Dr Andy Williamson.

The authors are grateful to the staff of the Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile for their support and assistance with this research and to the participants for generously giving their time. We are also grateful to Nettah Yoeli-Rimmer and Virginia Gibbons for their assistance with this project.

Cover image: Album del Congreso Nacional en su primer centenario 1818-1918, de Ramón A. Bolados C. Santiago de Chile: Imprenta España, 1918.

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RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

Parlamento 2020 es un ejercicio de visión llevado a cabo por la Sociedad Hansard en varios países. El objetivo del proyecto es explorar cómo las tecnologías nuevas y emergentes se usan o podrían ser utilizados para transformar los procesos parlamentarios y, en particular, su relación con el público. En la parte chilena de este proyecto, se realizó una serie de grupos focales semi-estructurados en persona y de entrevistas semi-estructuradas con las partes interesadas del Congreso Nacional de Chile, incluyendo a parlamentarios, funcionarios parlamentarios y miembros del público. El proyecto tenía como objetivo explorar cómo estos distintos grupos preveían un futuro parlamento en Chile, equipado con y apoyado por las tecnologías digitales y explorar de qué manera los medios digitales podrían transformar la forma de interacción entre los representantes elegidos y los ciudadanos.

Las conclusiones de los grupos focales y de las entrevistas resaltan la importancia de la participación pública efectiva y revelan que todos los grupos participantes creen que queda mucho por hacer en el Congreso Nacional de Chile para involucrar al público. Hubo una serie de temas claves que surgieron de los grupos focales y de las entrevistas. Los participantes acordaron en su mayoría en los siguientes temas: un mayor uso de las tecnologías, el aumento de los niveles de transparencia, y la eliminación de barreras a la información. Los tres grupos dieron prioridades diferentes a las otras cuestiones, y algunas (como el lenguaje comprensible) sólo se plantean como una cuestión de un solo grupo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cuestiones</th>
<th>Parlamentarios</th>
<th>Funcionarios parlamentarios</th>
<th>Los ciudadanos (24-29)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Un mayor uso de las nuevas tecnologías</td>
<td>★★★</td>
<td>★★★</td>
<td>★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educar al público y divulgación</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lenguaje comprensible</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aumentar la transparencia</td>
<td>★★★</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eliminación de los obstáculos a la información</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>El aumento de la interactividad</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★</td>
<td>★★★</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explicación:
- ★★★★: Crucial
- ★★★: Importante
- ★★: Importancia/prioridad baja
- ★: No se menciona
Los ciudadanos entre 24 y 29 años de edad tendían dar prioridad a una mayor utilización de las tecnologías digitales, especialmente enfatizando su potencial de colaboración en la legislación nueva, la mejora de la transparencia con respecto a las posiciones políticas y las finanzas de los elegidos y como una herramienta para la comunicación cotidiana entre los parlamentarios y los ciudadanos. Este grupo también cree que es fundamental que el lenguaje utilizado sea adecuado a cada público. Los jóvenes también consideraron que la eliminación de las barreras a la información, tales como los intermediarios, también es de gran importancia. A su juicio, no se puede confiar en las actuales fuentes de información política que perciben como parcial.

Tanto los diputados como los funcionarios destacaron la importancia de educar al público para que haya un mejor conocimiento y entendimiento de los procedimientos del Congreso Nacional chileno. Ambos grupos dijeron que la educación cívica pobre en Chile se ha traducido en bajos niveles de conocimiento político, lo que constituye un gran obstáculo a una mejor eficacia política. Haciéndose eco de los comentarios de los ciudadanos más jóvenes, los parlamentarios también vieron la eliminación de las barreras a la información y los intermediarios como muy importante, aunque su razonamiento era diferente, con el argumento de que son representaciones falsas y que el buen trabajo que hacen puede ser ignorado por los medios de comunicación. La transparencia de la información y los procesos eran importantes para los funcionarios del Congreso. Hicieron hincapié en la importancia de la comunicación cotidiana directa y transparente entre los legisladores y los ciudadanos.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parliament 2020 is a visioning exercise undertaken by the Hansard Society in a number of countries. The project is intended to explore how new and emergent technologies are being or could be used to transform the processes of parliament and, in particular, its relationship with the public. In the Chilean part of this project, we conducted a number of semi-structured face-to-face focus groups and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from the Chilean National Congress, including parliamentarians and parliamentary officials, and with members of the public. The aim of this project was to explore how these different groups envisaged a future parliament in Chile that was enabled and supported by digital technologies and how digital media might transform the way elected representatives interact with citizens.

The findings of the focus groups and interviews highlight the importance of effective public engagement and reveal that all the participant groups believe that more work is needed to be done by the Chilean National Congress to engage the public. There were a number of key themes emerging from the focus groups and interviews. The areas where participants mostly agreed were: the greater use of technologies, increasing levels of transparency, and removing barriers to information. Other issues were given different priorities across the three stakeholder groups, and some (such as understandable language) only being raised as an issue a single group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Parliamentarians</th>
<th>Parliamentary officials</th>
<th>Citizens (24-29)</th>
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<td>Greater use of new technologies</td>
<td>★★★</td>
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<td>Understandable language</td>
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<td>★★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing transparency</td>
<td>★★</td>
<td>★★★</td>
<td>★★</td>
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<td>Removing barriers to information</td>
<td>★★★★</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increasing interactivity</td>
<td>★★</td>
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Key:
- ★★★★: Crucial
- ★★★: Important
- ★★: Unimportant/low priority
- ★: Not mentioned
- -: Not mentioned
Citizens aged between 24 and 29 were more likely to prioritise the greater use of digital technologies, particularly emphasising their potential for collaboration on new legislation, enhancing transparency regarding the political positions and finances of elected representatives and as a tool for day-to-day communication between parliamentarians and citizens. This group also believed that it was crucial that the language used for different audiences was appropriate to that group. Young people also felt that the removal of barriers to information, such as intermediaries, was also of high importance. They felt that current sources of political information were not to be trusted and were perceived as being biased.

For both parliamentarians and parliamentary officials, there was a strong emphasis placed on the importance of educating the public so that they had greater understanding and awareness of the procedures within the Chilean National Congress. Both groups argued that poor civic education in Chile has resulted in low levels of political knowledge and that this is a major impediment to greater political efficacy. Echoing the comments of younger citizens, parliamentarians also saw the removal of barriers to information and intermediaries as being highly important, although their reasoning was different, arguing that they are misrepresented and that the good work that they do can be ignored by the mainstream media. Transparency of information and processes was important for officials of Congress to, emphasising the importance of direct and transparent everyday communication between legislators and citizens.
INTRODUCTION

Parliament 2020 is a visioning exercise that aims to identify how digital technologies can support new models for democratic engagement and improve processes within the Chilean National Congress to increase levels of transparency and accountability, whilst exploring the potential barriers to achieving this. It does this through a research process based on focus groups and interviews held with parliamentarians, parliamentary officials and citizens. Increasingly, the internet is allowing elected representatives to communicate in new ways with citizens. Hansard Society research has shown that, in the British case, both citizens and Parliamentarians are using new technologies to communicate and assemble their day-to-day lives.¹

The first phase of Parliament 2020, conducted in the United Kingdom, used semi-structured discussions through face-to-face focus groups with stakeholders from the UK Parliament (including officials and parliamentarians) and the public. This piece of research found that both parliamentarians and citizens felt that the UK Parliament was an important institution with a number of roles to fulfil; however parliamentarians and officials were not using the most effective communication channels, resulting in a lack of understanding about the needs of different stakeholders and the general direction of Parliament. It was recommended that the UK Parliament should provide information in more understandable, approachable and usable formats, employ new technologies as a communication tool and better engage the public more widely.²

This phase of Parliament 2020 was conducted in Chile, looking at how Chilean parliamentarians, parliamentary officials and citizens aged between 24 and 29 years old communicate and interact and at how parliamentary process and outreach could be enhanced through the use of digital technologies. The research aims to identify forms that parliamentary process and relationships between stakeholders could take in the future. As with the previous phase in the UK, this was done through a number of face-to-face focus groups with the stakeholders. In addition to this, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with parliamentarians. It is important to stress that this project’s focus is not on the technology or the functionality of online communication tools, rather the study looks to identify how digital technologies can be used to support a transformation in democratic engagement and parliamentary procedure.

The next section of this report describes the methodology used in the research and the make-up of the focus groups and interviews conducted as part of this project. Following this, the existing use of digital media within Congress is described and then the results of the focus groups and interviews will be presented and discussed. In the final section of this report, the findings are summarised and recommendations offered.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this project was collected through five focus groups conducted with a range of the Chilean National Congresses key stakeholders:

- Parliamentarians (including members from both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate);
- Parliamentary officials; and
- Members of the public.

The purpose of this was to get a variety of different perspectives on where the Chilean National Congress may not be serving these groups effectively and how it might improve on this. In addition to this, two semi-structured interviews were also conducted with individual parliamentarians. The focus of this research was on internal procedural reforms as opposed to more general reforms to the parliamentary or legislative systems in Chile.

Due to their relatively small size, focus groups are not intended to be statistically representative of the population as a whole but should be selected using a considered approach. In this case, participants were selected based on prior knowledge of them, their proximity and their availability. The selection of parliamentarians for interviews was also based on prior knowledge of them and also their availability. The different types of participant and the methods used to collect data from them are described below.

The interviews and focus groups were conducted in Spanish and the Spanish transcripts translated into English. Quotations used in this report (shown as indented text) are taken from the English transcripts.

**Parliamentarians**

Data collection from parliamentarians was conducted using a traditional focus group method. These took the form of semi-structured focus groups intended to examine the general themes of engagement, communication and technology.

In addition to focus groups, semi-structured interviews were conducted with parliamentarians. One of which was 59 years old and a member of the governing Socialist Party, whilst the other was 70 years old and a member of the opposition Independent Democratic Union party.

**Parliamentary Officials**

Different selections of parliamentary officials took part in two distinctive types of focus group. The first variety was a more traditional focus group, with semi-structured questions being asked, whilst the second type involved participants being asked to vision what they felt a future parliament should look like using ‘Animal Crossing: City Folk’, a life-simulation
video game for the Nintendo Wii. The purpose of using two distinct types of focus group was to allow participants to verbally express their ideas about what they thought a future parliament should look like, whilst also allowing participants to visually express what they believed should make up an ideal future parliament.

A short video of the focus group sessions and showing how the sessions featuring ‘Animal Crossing’ were structured is available at:
www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_popout&v=FatZ8zysM-Q

Citizens

Two groups of younger citizens, aged between the ages of 24 and 29, were recruited to take part in two types of focus group. Again, the first type was a traditional focus group with semi-structured questions being asked, and ‘Animal Crossing: City Folk’ was once again employed in the second focus group. The purpose of using these types of focus groups was the same as with the groups collecting data from parliamentary officials. The traditional focus group allowed participants to verbally express their vision of a future parliament whilst the focus group employing the life-simulation video game allowed visual expression of participants’ ideas about what makes up a future parliament.
EXISTING USE OF DIGITAL MEDIA

The Chilean National Congress already provides a variety of resources online, ranging from information the parliamentary calendar and access to bills through to social media content and an online consultation feature where the public can have their say on topical legislation, make simple submissions and indicate a preference for or against. This is primarily driven through the individual websites for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate as well as through the use of third-party social media tools and through the additional resources provided by parliamentary libraries website and channels:

- Senado de la República (www.senado.cl; www.senadovirtual.cl)
- Cámara de Diputados (www.camara.cl)
- Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional (www.bcl.cl)

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<th>Senado de la Republica</th>
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FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

Instead of simply describing the results of the focus groups and interviews one-by-one, the data collected during these sessions has been categorised by theme, providing an overall picture of current attitudes and views of current parliamentary procedure, engagement, and use of technologies. In addition to this, ideas and suggestions for how the Chilean National Congress can improve upon these areas are also included. These themes are discussed in detail below and are:

- Greater use of digital technologies
- Educating the Public/Outreach
- Understandable Language
- Increasing Levels of Transparency
- Removing Barriers to Information
- Increasing Interactivity
- The role of legislators

Greater use of Digital Technologies

Congress has made good use of digital media and also of more traditional forms of information delivery:

the decision to promote institutional television has been a good one.

Some members of Congress have become effective pioneers of social media, using it to better engage with their constituents and citizens in general, however, this is a minority. One notably example is Ramón Farias’ website, which contains the ‘Pola Bípola’ series of web videos, which are presented by a host discussing current events in an approachable youth-centred format. However, not every:

Congressman or Senator has access to such communications and it is not always available for each of the legislators and therefore [new media] is not always used properly. This is certainly a [limiting factor] in legislative activity.

The general feeling amongst participants was that information and communication technologies (ICTs) were not taken advantage of sufficiently to increase levels of transparency and trust within the Chilean political system. Parliamentary officials said that whilst the majority of representatives were using social networking sites, this was largely for the purposes of electioneering. They commented that once the election period had come to an end these tools were likely to be largely abandoned by both parliamentarians and their staff.

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3 See: R. Farias Official website: www.ramonfarias.cl
Attitudes towards the use of social media amongst elected representatives seem to have changed, with some commenting that there was an increased willingness to harness new technologies in order to communicate and connect with citizens. This was, in part, attributed to the decreasing age of elected representatives in Parliament. Younger participants and parliamentary officials were, however, much less positive about the current role of social media; commenting that its use was limited largely to online campaigning and far less emphasis was currently being placed on engaging with the public. Younger participants were also of the opinion that parliamentarians were risk adverse, and were unwilling to expose themselves to the added scrutiny that online engagement would attract.

Observing the personal value that they derived from the use of websites and social media, one parliamentarian noted that:

> what I really appreciate and I think has the greatest benefit and effectiveness, is personal contact, the hours of effort that you spend in touch with people.

All participants acknowledged the benefits of harnessing the internet to allow for direct communication between parliamentarians and citizens, creating closer ties between the two. For example, younger participants said that despite their wish for increased levels of interaction with those in Congress, it is impossible for a parliamentarian to visit 20,000 homes; one senator said that using social networks allowed him to speak to several thousand people at once. Parliamentarians were also enthusiastic about the potential of information and communication technologies to improve dialogue between themselves and citizens; however they were also concerned about the potential for their role to change from legislators to broadcasters of information as a result of this.

**Educating the Public/Outreach**

Congress has suffered what has been suffered throughout politics and it has not been very successful in many ways communicating with the public.

An apathetic younger generation feel disconnected and distrustful of parliamentarians, who themselves feel unfairly represented and misunderstood by the public. It was suggested on multiple occasions that one of the main reasons for this was a distinct lack of reliable information on the Chilean political process and the role of citizens in this process. One parliamentarian suggested that a distinctly limited level of formal civic education in schools has resulted in young people demonstrating poor knowledge of the political system and democracy generally.

> First, there is, no civic education in this country in schools, except in one semester, the rest have no idea.
It was also suggested by one parliamentarian that, as a result of this, young people are poorly equipped in terms of political knowledge when they gain their democratic right to vote. In their focus group, parliamentarians also highlighted the difficulties raised by the growth of an individualistic culture in modern Chilean society. It was agreed that there is less emphasis placed on the collective interest than there used to be, with people only generally caring about the issues that they feel directly impact them. One parliamentarian said that they felt the nation state was becoming broken up.

Members of the focus groups involving the younger participants complained that the procedures within the Chilean National Congress were confusing and inaccessible, leaving members of the public feeling generally alienated from the political process. This suggests either that procedure within the Chilean National Congress is not effectively communicated to the public or that said procedures are unnecessarily complicated.

It was also recognised that the existence of ICTs alone is not enough. Participants commented that new technologies must be fully integrated into political institutions in Chile and used specifically for the aspirations of better engagement and a more connected parliament. One Senator made the argument that the Chilean National Congress should work to educate the people instead of simply being what he describes as A law-making factory.

In one of the visualisation exercises, participants saw the Chilean National Congress as a museum; somewhere for people to go on a school trip when instead it needs to be somewhere that is current and topical and which provides detailed information on its work to the public and especially to schools.

**Understandable Language**

Younger participants from the focus groups highlighted the importance of language. It was said that at present the type of language used in the Chilean National Congress was not attractive to a younger audience and the mainstream population. It was remarked that in order to engage the population as a whole, the language used in Parliament had to be simple, but at the same time capable of attracting people to read about proceedings or to watch it on television. One participant in a citizen’s focus groups remarked:

I think [the] dichotomy between parliamentarian and citizen should be eliminated, after all parliamentarians are citizens.

It is noted that language was not raised in any of the interviews or focus groups with parliamentarians and parliamentary officials. This could suggest that there might be a lack of awareness within the Chilean National Congress with regards to the importance of how
Increasing Levels of Transparency

As previously mentioned, it was generally felt that ICTs were not yet being fully employed to bring about transparency and trust effectively. This was highlighted particularly by parliamentary officials, who said that the internet was used largely as a tool for electioneering. However, it was noted that there was an increased willingness to employ ICTs to better facilitate effective engagement between citizen and elected representative. This slowly emerging increased willingness to engage is perhaps a distant echo of young Chilean’s attitudes and desires with regard to transparency in public life:

I think there are no subjects to be omitted, at least if we are talking about the people that make laws and rule us in our daily life, civil life... even the toughest things must be known.

It was felt that parliamentarians just represent themselves or those who they choose to represent and that there still exists strong hereditary elite amongst members of Congress. If greater information on the quality of parliamentarians’ work were easily accessible there would be a greater necessity for them to effectively represent the needs of the electorate at large. This problem is identified from two sides; for citizens there is a lack of awareness or understanding of the work done by their elected representatives and for parliamentarians the challenge is being able to accurately convey what it is they do and the role that the mainstream media plays in restricting this flow of information.

We are “prisoners” of the monopoly control of the private broadcasters who make ratings the primary element, which leads to the legislative function not getting [air time].

There was, however, strong support for Congress itself becoming more open through the use of television, radio and web-based TV. Parliamentary employees foresaw online technology in 2020 enabling people to view and scrutinise their representatives directly, to an extent that is not currently possible. The younger focus group members echoed this view:

If someone is representing me, I want to know how they are doing it.

There was an observation that the ‘Senador Virtual’ website gave citizens a chance to review topical legislation and to pass comment on it, even indicating their support or otherwise. However, there was some scepticism as to how effective or transparent this process was and a perception that parliamentarians did not take much notice of it:

Every day you see on this Virtual Senate, a report comes out and it is the [parliamentary] adviser who reads it, the parliamentarians do not read it and vote as they want to, without knowing what the public thinks.
To improve trust, digital media can be used to provide communication that as closely resembling face-to-face contact as possible. There is a risk that using email or social networks to communicate or receive information from parliamentarians can become depersonalised and anonymous, although clearly this would for many still be far less depersonalised than the current system. Creation of a personalised relationship, according to parliamentary staff, is what builds levels of trust amongst citizens and commitment in the Congressman.

One parliamentarian spoke of how they currently disseminate information about the work they do, saying that they take out pages in local newspapers every four months, buy advertising space on several local radio stations (because no single station reaches all of their constituents) and does a lot of door-to-door activity meeting constituents face-to-face. Other members of congress spoke of the simple mathematical problem that seems almost impossible for them to overcome, saying that the likelihood that a constituent will interact with their representative is minuscule.

As a word of caution it is also noted here that internet access is not universal, currently standing at just over half the population (44% of Chileans are also registered on Facebook) and that to some degree using the internet to promote democracy and parliamentary business can lead to enhancing a tool for the already engaged thereby creating a further and even more extreme democratic divide. In other words, a digital strategy can:

- Raise expectations, but not in 100% of the citizens, rather in the Web 2.0 users and people who really wants to take that step and not get stuck on the prejudice that we cannot do anything in politics.

**Removing Barriers to Information**

As one parliamentarian noted, both the legislative system and the historically institutionalised nature of democracy in Chile mean that there is public interest in the laws that are being passed. So much so that

> in the case of Chile, the most fundamental laws are... sold in the streets. It is an awesome thing, that speaks well, but at the same time, speaks to the lives of citizens as highly governed by the laws in force.

Yet this public interest does not necessarily attest to a wider public understanding of the role and function of the legislature or its members. The younger participants in the focus groups see social and political issues as being important to them and that they are motivated to act on these issues. However they also caution this, saying that they are likely to feel less motivated to act on what is important to them because they believe that intermediaries (such as bureaucracy and the media) have a high degree of control over the

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4 See: www.internetworldstats.com/south.htm
flow of information between citizens and decision makers. This results in demonstrably increased levels of apathy and distrust of politicians.

Throughout the focus groups and interviews, it was acknowledged that the primary source of information for most citizens is the established mass media. The parliamentarians felt very strongly that this poses a significant barrier between themselves and the public, as they have to rely on a third party to communicate their message. Parliamentarians also said that they felt the media focused too much on negativity and scandal, and paid little attention to legislative work, which in turn contributes to increased levels of distrust and dissatisfaction within Parliament. One elected representative said that Parliament is captive to the privately controlled mainstream media:

The parliamentarian is involved in a car crash or was speeding or appeared dancing in a disco or dated a good looking girl...That is the parliamentary news. But he was in a parliamentary commission every day until ten in the evening analysing a project, that’s not news; it cannot find a place in the media.

Parliamentarians and parliamentary officials highlighted the difficulties they faced in negotiating established media outlets such as television and radio which can be highly localised, broadcasting only to a limited number of people within their region – physically travelling around their regions to communicate with citizens appears to be a significant challenge. One parliamentarian commented:

I have from end to end three hours of travel, it is impossible for me to reach all communities and be there with my people.

Participants on the whole were relatively pessimistic about the state of the Chilean National Congress’ coverage on television. One parliamentarian commented that the Senate’s own television channel was of a high standard; however he also said that it has largely failed to reach the desired number of people. This was partly a result of limited levels of access amongst citizens, with the channel only existing on paid cable service and being 40 channels away from other stations on the electronic programming guide.

In one of the visioning exercises, the younger participants envisaged a wall outside of the Chilean National Congress, where legislative documents were posted for all to see, a place with full, open access. In the same exercise, participants identified and removed potential intermediaries between elected representatives and citizens, commenting that they did not trust these intermediaries to effectively communicate either the message of representatives or their own views. Instead, they envisaged a direct line of communication being formed between members of the Chilean National Congress and between citizens.

As was mentioned earlier, there were complaints from the younger participants that the procedures within congress seemed confusing and inaccessible. Whilst this can be seen as
a failing in educating the public, it was also seen as a barrier to engagement for the younger participants.

Participants envisioned a direct connection being created between citizens and elected representatives for exchanging information. It was suggested that this should be established through two types of medium: online and also traditional methods of communication for those who do not have access to the Internet for whatever reason. The online methods suggested were email between elected representatives and citizens, and also individual blogs enabling elected representatives to communicate their work to the people. As part of one of the visioning exercises, the younger participants suggested two main forms of communication; the first being a more general type that communicates the work of Parliament for all whom are interested, and the second being a more specific kind of communication being sent out to relevant, interested parties.

Some of the younger participants placed an emphasis on transparency of information, arguing that their representatives should be open about the work they do, their positions on various issues, the financial resources that they use and their role in the legislative process. Further to this, the same participants commented that it was important that transparency exist in relation to the participation of citizens, in that their views should be openly available as well. It was envisaged that a technology where representatives could be located at any time and their current work was openly available could be put into place. The dislike of intermediaries such as bureaucracy and media raised by the youth group has a potential to persist if online communication is not used effectively.

There were also some comments about the presidential political system in Chile leaving parliament as an indistinct entity, with the president and the government being the focal points for the public and parliament becoming marginalised as a result. Parliamentarians felt that Chile’s constitutional arrangements put them at a disadvantage in terms of the perception citizens hold of them. In contrast to the executive, their working processes appear adversarial and confrontational, but when the legislative process is complete the president signs the law to great applause.

Parliamentarians also commented that they are not recognised for the positive contributions they make to the democratic process. Parliamentary officials also held this view; they said that from seeing the work parliamentarians do, the public’s negative perception is largely unwarranted.

**Increasing Interactivity**

A recurring theme throughout the interviews and focus groups was the importance of two-way interactivity, as opposed to elected representatives using the internet to simply broadcast their messages to the public or using the internet as a campaigning tool.
Parliamentary officials said that they felt a long-term approach was needed, and that modern politics in Chile was about gaining a consensus as opposed to a simple majority.

Parliamentarians acknowledged that current methods of communication between themselves and citizens were ineffective. In response to a congressman describing the long hours he spends meeting with constituents, a congresswoman stated that parliamentarians are misguided in their belief that they communicate with many people:

We believe that we communicate with citizens, but that’s not true. If you count, the ability to directly relate as a person to your voters is close to zero.

Parliamentarians commented that the reason that they are unable to have a direct relationship with citizens is down to a lack of time and resources, and not necessarily through a lack of effort on their part. When asked if they believed that online technologies such as Facebook and Twitter had a role to play, one respondent said that they did, though on the whole they believed that the vast majority of the electorate were older and therefore less likely to be using these technologies, so it was important to use more traditional methods to communicate with citizens as well.

The younger focus group participants envisaged a “fourth branch of government”, suggesting the use of wikis to enable interested citizens, interest groups and professionals to contribute to the development of legislation. One of the interviewed Senators was of the view there exists a large volume of unused knowledge, which could contribute to the development and quality of legislation through the use of interactive online tools.

Younger focus group participants also suggested that the law making process could be improved upon by involving citizens through the use of video conferencing and online plebiscites:

Let’s imagine, in Valparaiso there is a parliamentarian “x”, and he votes after a small citizen plebiscite, so this way people can vote and say “I made the law for my self”.

Whilst it is noted that members of the same focus group disagreed over the logic and practicalities of how their role in the legislative process would play out, there was generally agreement that citizens should have more opportunities to play an active part in the legislative process and that interactive online tools can and should play a significant role in enabling this.

During one of the visioning exercises, the younger focus group participants suggested that items, which represented policy ideas, could be passed from citizens to elected representatives allowing people’s view to feed directly into the political process.

As mentioned earlier, parliamentarians were enthusiastic about the use of ICTs to improve levels of participation amongst citizens in Chile, and to improve the relationship between
themselves and the people. However, the same focus group participants also felt that using new technologies could make them mass communicators instead of performing their proper role of legislators. There was a complaint that people were coming to them to solve their individual problems, which they felt was simply not possible and not part of their job description. They also felt that for online participation between parliamentarians and citizens there must also be improved levels of civic education in Chile.

**Role of Legislators**

It has already been noted above that some members of Congress are more effective users of digital media than others and this is natural and to be expected (and repeats a pattern seen in other legislatures). The nature of the Chilean legislative system was though also seen as creating a barrier to effective communication:

What happens is parliamentarians are experts in generalities, they are not usually specialists, deputies are not elected by their professions, intellectual or experience in public affairs in general parliamentarians are elected by other factors: Closeness with citizens, able to communicate with them, leadership.

This means that

in their legislative activity they are normally not able to explain the scope and latitude of the legislative process, the uncertainties that exist

And that they can lack the historical or legal background required to be able to translate new legislation into terms that the public can understand and appreciate the effect that it might have on their daily lives. This suggests that a mediating role is required from parliamentary officials to support the translation of legislation and particularly its impact into easy to understand language to assist parliamentarians communicate with their constituents.
CONCLUSIONS

This research benefits from the inclusion of the perspectives of participants from both the elected and operation sides of the Chilean National Congress (parliamentary officials and parliamentarians), as well as drawing on the views of members of the public. Whilst parliamentary officials and parliamentarians might be working towards the same goals, any lack of communication between themselves and also between Congress and citizens can result in a lack of understanding of each other’s needs. What this research has set out to do is identify how digital technologies can enhance the communications and relationships both within Congress and between it and citizens, thereby helping to shape the way in which the Chilean National Congress functions in the future.

As was the case with the first phase of this project undertaken in the UK, parliamentary officials see their role as working to satisfy the needs of parliamentarians whilst at the same time it is clear that the needs of parliamentarians can differ very greatly amongst them. This is further complicated by the need to improve levels of transparency and accountability in order to satisfy the citizens of Chile. Parliamentarians represented here feel strongly that they are the representatives of the people and are themselves interested in finding more reliable and effective ways of communicating, in particular they are looking for ways to circumvent the perceived bias limitations of the mainstream media.

In summary, this research produced five key findings, which are discussed below:

1. Social media is not being harnessed as effectively as it could be;
2. Parliamentary process is inaccessible and difficult for citizens to follow;
3. Complex and specialised language is a barrier to engagement;
4. Information needs to be available in a timely way where people already are; and
5. Trust and knowledge can be improved by building more direct links

Above all, we note that the comment of one member of Congress:

Democracy is not just institutions… [it] is more than that; democracy is a way of life related to the socialization process that citizens have. The socialization processes of a citizen are grown in the family and school.

The first key point to come out of the focus groups and interviews is that the internet and social media is not currently being used effectively to facilitate communication between elected officials and citizens. As mentioned earlier, whilst all groups were generally enthusiastic about the potential of the internet in bringing about a direct link between parliamentarians and citizens, it was felt that there was currently too much emphasis being placed on online campaigning and very little use of the internet for communicating with citizens in between election periods.
The second point to be drawn out of the focus groups and interviews is that at present, citizens find current parliamentary procedures and the political process in Chile confusing and inaccessible. All groups of participants highlighted this issue, with parliamentarians arguing that more needs to be done to educate the public about parliamentary process and the political system, whilst the younger participants argued that the processes themselves were unnecessarily confusing.

The third point arising from the focus groups was the importance of language for the younger participants. It was argued that in order for the Chilean National Congress to effectively communicate its message effectively to citizens, language must be tailored to the particular audience that they are trying to reach.

The fourth point that emerged from this study was the importance of accessible information. Members of the younger focus groups stated that they felt information about the Chilean National Congress should be made available in formats that are appropriate to them. In particular, all groups of participants argued that levels of trust amongst the public were lower because of the way that intermediaries such as the bureaucracy and the media filter the political information that reaches the citizen. It was argued that in order for information to be effectively communicated, barriers such as these must be removed.

The fifth and final main point to come out of this study is the importance of a direct link between citizens and elected representatives, and within this, the importance of transparency with regard to the political positions and finances of parliamentarians. Younger participants envisaged an online tool for collaboration between citizens and elected representatives in the development of new legislation. At the same time, whilst positive about the potential for increased interactivity between themselves and citizens, parliamentarians cited a lack of time in being able to consult citizens more regularly. Younger participants also remarked that they would like an elected representative’s political positions and use of public money to be made freely available online.

The table below shows the key themes that emerged from the focus groups and interviews, and shows the importance attached by the different groupings that were surveyed. The areas where participants mostly agreed were: the greater use of technologies, increasing levels of transparency, and removing barriers to information. Every other issue faced disagreement between the different groups with regard to the level of importance placed. It is worth noting that where issues did not emerge in the focus groups or interviews it does not necessarily suggest that those groups place no emphasis here. It may simply be the case that the nature of this research resulted in the topic not arising.
Citizens aged between 24 and 29 were more likely to prioritise the greater use of digital technologies, particularly emphasising their potential for collaboration on new legislation, enhancing transparency regarding the political positions and finances of elected representatives and as a tool for day-to-day communication between parliamentarians and citizens. This group also believed that it was crucial that the language used for different audiences was appropriate to that group. Young people also felt that the removal of barriers to information, such as intermediaries, was also of high importance. They felt that current sources of political information were not to be trusted and were perceived as being biased.

For both parliamentarians and parliamentary officials, there was a strong emphasis placed on the importance of educating the public so that they had greater understanding and awareness of the procedures within the Chilean National Congress. Both groups argued that poor civic education in Chile has resulted in low levels of political knowledge and that this is a major impediment to greater political efficacy. Echoing the comments of younger citizens, parliamentarians also saw the removal of barriers to information and intermediaries as being highly important, although their reasoning was different, arguing that they are misrepresented and that the good work that they do can be ignored by the mainstream media. Transparency of information and processes was important for Parliamentary officials to, emphasising the importance of direct and transparent everyday communication between legislators and citizens.
To summarise the main findings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outreach and Education</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Face to face</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-active engagement</td>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Interactivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent and accountable</td>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>Modernisation</td>
<td>Representative versus legislator</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural</td>
<td>Modernisation versus traditional</td>
<td>Workflow versus document flow</td>
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</table>

**BUILDS KNOWLEDGE AND TRUST**

- Strengthening the role of Congress.
- Increased knowledge leading to greater perceived relevance value.
- Opening up access to information/data through:
  - API/Open Data policy
  - Social media strategy
  - Trusting 3rd parties
- Online as a key segment within multi-channel strategy
- Blend of ‘Push’ versus ‘pull’
RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section focuses on recommendations for the Chilean National Congress that aim to:

- Modernise the Chilean National Congress as an institution and its processes;
- Provide information in accessible and relevant formats;
- Enhance engagement with citizens, creating a direct link between themselves and elected representatives; and
- Promote better use of new technologies.

Communication

1. Encourage more MPs to blog, use video and social networks to engage with a broader audience, particularly young people.
2. The congressional websites are effective and well-developed tools however more could be done to take both Houses beyond their own digital garden and to engage with the public in more open third-party web-spaces.
3. Provide greater public access to video and audio content so that it can be used and embedded by third parties. This facility will also assist elected representatives who want to re-post covered of their speeches on their own websites.
4. An effort should be made to discover how different groups of the public would like to be communicated with by the Chilean National Congress in order to create better understand of their audience.
5. We note the efforts to allow for the provision of citizens’ views to be fed back into the lawmaking process and recommend that this work is built upon and extended to allow for greater public inclusion in the work of Congress.

Education and Awareness Building

6. Produce guides and information in easy to read language explaining how parliament works, how legislation is passed and the role of MPs in this. Such material can further describe how MPs can contacted and could be supplemented with short audio visual material targeted at the public (and particular the young) using familiar language and descriptors.
7. Develop more resources educational resources and ensure that knowledge and awareness of the political and legislative process, including the working of Congress, is included in the school curriculum as well as being made available in a contextualised way for those who are in tertiary education and in a ‘just-in-time’ accessible way for all citizens.
8. Parliamentarians should be encouraged to go to their local schools to explain how the Chilean National Congress works and what their own roles are within it.
9. The legislative journey should be represented visually online, where possible with clear timelines and all relevant information, making it easy to understand and to follow for the public.

**Technology Support**

10. Provide training and support within Congress for members to help them understand the relevance and value of digital technologies and to assist them in starting websites, blogs and creating a social media presence.
11. Resources should be produced for both online and offline consumption in order to allow for balanced, non-preferential dissemination of information between different audiences.
12. Parliamentary staff should be mindful that a growing number of parliamentarians wish to have information provided to them digitally and innovative tools and practices should be reviewed regularly to identify whether they can streamline the legislative and communications process – for example does the advent of tablet computers (such as the Apple iPad) present an opportunity for more effective document dissemination within Congress.

**Information**

13. Data collected as part of day-to-day work in the Chilean National Congress should be stored in formats and in ways that ensure that they are machine-readable by other applications so that information can be displayed on websites that people are already using or accessed by new third-party citizen-initiated sites.
14. All electronic data (including documents) should be correctly indexed and tagged, allowing them to be easily searchable for their entire contents, as opposed to just their title or excerpt, allowing citizens to access the information that they are interested in more easily.
15. The Chilean National Congress should provide explanatory notes alongside legislation, making it easier for the general public to understand.
16. Clear and open channels of communication must be made available for parliamentarians, parliamentary officials, and citizens to understand each other’s need better.
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Focus Group Pro-forma/Estructura preguntas parlamentarios

Estructura de preguntas para la entrevista grupal a parlamentarios del Congreso Nacional de Chile.

Comunicación
1. En su experiencia, ¿cuáles han sido las mejores maneras que ha tenido el Congreso para comunicarse con los ciudadanos? Y ¿En cuáles casos, cree usted que ha habido una mala comunicación?
2. ¿Existen herramientas que impacten su capacidad para comunicarse con los ciudadanos, inhibiendo o facilitando la comunicación, durante las etapas del proceso legislativo?
3. ¿Qué cree usted que podría hacerse para mejorar la forma en que el Congreso se comunica con los ciudadanos?

Acercamiento
4. ¿Qué cree Ud. que debe hacer para fomentar una mayor comprensión de los ciudadanos hacia la forma en que trabaja el Congreso?
5. ¿Qué impacto cree usted que tienen las tecnologías digitales (como Internet y teléfonos móviles) en la democracia representativa?, y ¿cree usted que hay formas en las que su uso podría conducir a una mayor participación de los ciudadanos? ¿o tendrá un efecto neutro o negativo?

Información
6. ¿Cómo cree que han cambiado sus necesidades de información en los últimos tiempos, y como cree Ud. que cambiarán en el futuro?
7. Respecto a sus asesores ¿Ud. cree que han cambiado sus necesidades de información en los últimos tiempos, y que cambiarán en el futuro?
8. ¿Qué puede hacer el Congreso para apoyar estos requerimientos de información cambiantes?

Recursos y Cultura
9. La comunicación por correo electrónico y los nuevos medios de comunicación social digitales como blogs, Twitter y Facebook, han creado expectativas entre algunos miembros del público sobre el nivel de familiaridad y la velocidad de respuesta de sus parlamentarios y de las autoridades parlamentarias. ¿Cree Ud. que el Congreso debería cambiar sus procedimientos y procesos para hacerse cargo de esto? ¿o tal vez se trata de una expectativa poco realista de los ciudadanos?.

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10. ¿El Congreso y los parlamentarios están dispuestos al cambio y a la adopción de nuevas tecnologías? ¿Considera que las adopta rápidamente, las analiza primero para luego adoptarlas? ¿o tiene la tendencia a evitarlas?
11. ¿Cómo la adopción de TICs afectaría al personal y recursos del Congreso?