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Transparency and political monitoring in the digital environment. Towards a typology of citizen-driven platforms

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Abstract

Introduction: The digital landscape has facilitated the development of new mechanisms that help citizens to exercise transparency, which is linked to political monitoring and contributes to the redefinition of political communication and participation. **Methods:** The study is based on the case study technique, applied to five digital initiatives, to analyse the forms taken by citizen-driven transparency-based digital platforms oriented towards the monitoring of the centres of power. **Results and conclusions:** The results indicate that there are five types of platforms according to their main purpose and the transparency dimension they cover. These modalities focus on open government data, news of public interest, dissemination of diverse ideas and points of view, responses from political actors, and citizen participation in political decision-making processes.

Keywords

Political communication; transparency; monitoring; digital media

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Translation by **Cruz Alberto Martínez Arcos** (PhD in Communication, University of London)

1. Introduction: citizen monitoring and transparency in the digital landscape

The digital environment has led to numerous processes of transformation in the fields of political communication and participation. The consolidation and popularisation of social media has contributed decisively to these transformations, given that they have generated new forms of intermediation and connectivity that are reconfiguring the communication space (Fuchs, 2014; Bunz, 2014). One of the main innovations is associated with the emergence of monitoring as a new mechanism for citizens' digital involvement in political life (Feenstra et al., 2017). This phenomenon involves the articulation of mechanisms, mainly through the web 2.0, which allow the scrutiny and regulation of the centres of social power, favouring the accountability of their performance (Keane, 2009; Feenstra, 2012). Digital monitoring involves a wide range of expressions and has a strong potential for political innovation. In this sense, it is connected to change and the regeneration of democracy.

The implementation of monitoring is linked to the concept of monitory democracy (Keane, 2009), which proposes that in the current context of information abundance and the expansion of digital technologies linked to social networks there are new mechanisms to scrutinise the actions of the centres of power, not only political but also economic and media centres (Feenstra, 2012; Keane, 2013). Monitoring seeks accountability and the eradication of abuse of power. It is configured as a form of extra-representative political participation that allows citizens to directly engage in political life and potentially contribute to achieving democratic quality (Rosanvallon, 2011).

Despite the growing importance acquired by political monitoring in various geographical contexts, including Spain (Feenstra et al. 2017), there has been no progress in the study of a key factor associated with its exercise: transparency. This can be understood as the ability of citizens to access relevant information and data to exercise their political rights (Manfredi, 2017). In this sense, it is configured as one of the foundations of public and private governance and, at the same time, as a precondition for the development of the political participation of a democratic citizenry. Through access to information, citizens can activate the accountability of the centres of power of a society and to demand, if that is the case, responsibilities for bad practices. In this way, a connection between transparency and monitoring is established since the former is understood as a prerequisite of the latter. Free, simple, structured and comprehensible access to public interest data is a requirement to scrutinise and control the activity of the centres of power. Transparency and monitoring are inextricably linked from this point of view.

This link gives transparency the status of an asset for democracy. A small level of transparency can be seen as a symptom of low democratic quality (Manfredi, 2017). However, too much transparency has also been identified as a potential mechanism that can lead to the generalisation of digital surveillance, to the loss of privacy and, in short, to the emergence of totalitarian attitudes (Han, 2013). However, beyond these criticisms, the fight against opacity and the demand for transparency can contribute to a monitoring process that positively affects democracy by preventing corruption (Schiavi, 2017; Dabbagh-Rollán, 2016) and by implementing a culture of accountability among social elites that

promotes good governance. In this sense, transparency is not an end in itself, but a mechanism to promote other actions, particularly the activation of monitoring.

The implementation of transparency requires the articulation of two dimensions: legal and communicative. The first has to do with the development of normative provisions that enable public access to information and force institutions and organisations to encourage it and provide it. The deployment of this type of measures has become widespread in several countries in recent years. One of these countries is Spain, which in December 2013 passed the Law (19/2013) on Transparency, Access to Public Information and Good Governance, which regulates and establishes the publicity obligations of public agencies and institutions and guarantees the right of access to information. In this way, the legal context is established to enable the implementation of transparency, which among other things has provoked the proliferation of transparency websites (Moreno-Sardà et al., 2017). For its part, the communicative dimension has to do with the form in which data reach citizens. The high amount of information generated by public organisations, the accelerated production speed of data and the ease of dissemination through the digital environment (Mayer-Schönberger, Cukier, 2013) requires access to be complemented with communicative tools that allow citizens to consume public information in a simple and understandable way. Offering large volumes of raw and disaggregated data can lead to disinformation among citizens. It is not just a matter of collecting and disseminating data, but to communicatively process data to enable their transformation into public knowledge. Here, data journalism plays a prominent role (Gray et al., 2012; Casero-Ripollés, López-Meri, 2015).

The digital environment offers new opportunities for transparency. Ease of access to information for anyone is favoured by the internet. In this way, citizens can get the information they need to be able to oversee the action of the power centres. In this sense, digital technologies potentially allow the extension of the exercise of transparency by citizens. This is connected with civic monitoring, understood as the monitoring carried out by the civil society, which is a novelty derived from the Web 2.0 (Feenstra, Casero-Ripollés, 2014).

In the digital landscape, citizens play a renewed role in the field of political communication. The possibilities offered by social media for anyone to become an autonomous producer and disseminator of content opens the door to this redefinition. The Web 2.0 offers more options for the empowerment of citizens (Jenkins, 2006; Castells, 2012). Thus, political and journalistic elites have more difficulty in maintaining control over the public sphere and have to face a landscape that is much more competitive than in previous decades (McNair, 2006). Citizens can exercise counterpower through digital networks and media (Castells, 2009; Sampedro, 2014) and one of the ways to express it civic monitoring (Feenstra, Casero-Ripollés, 2014). For the implementation of this new form of political participation, transparency is configured as an essential element. In this sense, the digital environment is fostering the emergence of different initiatives that are driven by the civil society and are based on transparency oriented towards political monitoring.

The objective of this work is to analyse this type of platforms to establish a typology. In this sense, we follow the line established by previous works that have classified different forms of monitoring (Feenstra, Casero-Ripollés, 2014). However, this research transports this effort to the field of

transparency, thus making an innovation. This work aims to go beyond the previous literature that measures the level of transparency of public organisations such as municipalities (Moreno-Sardá et al. 2017; Rebolledo et al. 2017), public television corporations (López-López et al. 2017) and private companies (Rodríguez-Pallares, Pérez-Serrano, 2017). By focusing on citizen initiatives, on the one hand, and by proposing a typology of them, on the other, this work makes an original contribution to study of transparency in the digital environment and the different forms it can take.

2. Methods

The objective of this research work is to analyse the forms taken by citizen driven transparency-based digital platforms oriented towards the monitoring of the centres of power. In particular, it seeks to identify their objectives and activities, as well as the effects of their activity in society.

The method used in this research is the case study, which through the analysis of specific cases will allow us to extract the main characteristics of the different types of platforms (Eisenhardt, 1989). The use of this technique facilitates the in-depth exploration of these forms of control over power as well as the wider understanding of the phenomenon from a qualitative perspective (Simons, 2011). Specifically, we analyse five initiatives: Osoigo, Kuorum.org, Wikitribune, Deba-t.org and OpenKratio. The sample selection was based on three criteria: novelty, connection with the civil society and innovative nature. In accordance, the selected case studies are all recently created, driven by citizens, and introduce new communicative dynamics in relation to transparency.

The use of the case study is particularly relevant for the analysis of emerging phenomena on which there are few studies (Cepeda, 2006), like these citizen-driven transparency-based digital platforms. This method allows us to understand the research objects within their contexts, the form they take and the way they operate communicatively speaking. Despite its limited ability to generate statistically generalisable conclusions, the evidence derived from the case study has an interesting potential at the theoretical and analytical levels and allows us to establish the bases for further studies (Yin, 2014). Therefore, this method is particularly appropriate to establish typologies on social phenomena, which is the objective pursued by this research.

3. Results

This section first describes the case study of the five selected initiatives: Osoigo, Kuorum.org, Wikitribune, Deba-t.org and OpenKratio. Afterwards, it proposes a typology to classify the different forms taken by the citizen-driven, transparency-based, monitoring-oriented digital platforms.

3.1. Osoigo: dialogue between political representatives and citizens

Osoigo is a web platform that was launched in 2014 by Eneko Aguirre to build bridges between governments and citizens so that they can talk to each other directly, without intermediaries. It seeks to have a direct impact on politics. Its founder has stated he launched this initiative after observing that

the majority of Spanish politicians had an account in Twitter and other social networks, but generally did not respond to the questions and comments made by their followers.

As mentioned in its website (<https://www.osoigo.com/>), Osoigo welcomes all politicians who, regardless of their ideology, can answer to the questions posed by citizens. So far 642 politicians from 51 different parties have answered the questions made by citizens. The list of politicians includes more than 60 regional deputies and presidents like, for example, Íñigo Urkullu (Euskadi), Uxue Barcos (Navarre), Javier Lambán (Aragon) and the President of the Community of Madrid, Cristina Cifuentes, who is precisely the most active member, since she has answered more than 500 questions.

The operation of the platform is simple. On the one hand, politicians who want to participate in this initiative must fill out a form so that the Osoigo team can check all the data and create an official profile. The website's "Politicians" section shows the names of all the politicians who are registered, as well as those who have unregistered from the website. The profile of each member specifies the political party to which they belong, the positions they hold, the number of questions raised by citizens and the number of questions they have answered. In this regard, there are lists with the new members, the top ten of the week and the top five of the month and the year. Information can also be filtered by parties and provinces.

On the other hand, users who want to make questions also have to register. After they complete this step they can make as many questions as they want. After sending the question on the website, Osoigo notifies the user the number of supporting votes that are required to collect in the next ten days for the question to be asked to the selected politician. To get the votes as fast as possible, it is necessary to share the question on social networks or to email it to contacts. Once the votes have been collected, the question is asked to the politician. Before the answer is made public, the website notifies the user who asked the question and the users who voted in favour. In the same way, the answers are also ranked by the registered user community (currently there are about 15,000 registered users). This allows us the website to know the influence of the answers, i.e., whether the politician's answer manages to convince the public or generates rejection. The whole process is carry out with transparency.

With the aim of preserving respect and good practices among users and politicians, Osoigo has created a decalogue of standards for the use of the platform (<https://www.osoigo.com/es/normas-de-uso.html>), which specifies which attitudes are tolerable and which are not. This way, the platform reserves its right to block user profiles that do not respect the established criteria. The objective is that the dialogue that is established between users and politicians is constructive and does not include insults or disqualifications.

Osoigo is presented to users as a tool whose purpose is to promote the dialogue between citizens, politicians and associations to promote political action and commitment. In this context, the platform considers the participation of associations as key to carry out actions, support users' questions and encourage the commitment of political actors. To do this, Osoigo gives them their own space within

the platform, which gives visibility to all the actions they propose and allow them to share more information about their proposals.

Osoigo used to be a free tool but then decided to monetise its system. The amount to be paid depends on the number of notifications sent to users. As noted by its founder, Eneko Aguirre, in an interview with *El País* newspaper, the price of the first thousand notifications would be about six cents. In the event that, for example, the notifications surpassed 5,000, the price would be approximately 120 euros per month. In this way, parties and associations will be able to make their actions known to the public for a small amount of money. In this regard, Aguirre has argued that “it will be like change.org but involving politicians to take a stand. And monetisation will come through notifications. Users who support the questions and the actions the associations want politicians to carry out will receive notifications on the progress of these actions” [1].

Osoigo also has the “Agora” section, which holds digital debates at the request of users (<https://agora.osoigo.com/>). These debates, which may have the participation of one or more politicians, focus on a specific topic. The five questions with the largest number of votes are asked. The outstanding debates include the one organised by the *Huffington Post* on subrogated gestation and the Basque economy and politics.

So far Osoigo is only available in Spain, but its team, now made up of five partners, is working on two pilot projects in Latin America, in particular, one in the State of Mexico and another in Córdoba, Argentina.

3.2. Kuorum.org: connection with political decision-making processes

Kuorum.org was launched in 2013 as a social enterprise by Matías Nso, Iñaki Domínguez and José María García, with the aim of connecting politicians and citizens. It is a tool of citizen participation that seeks to improve communication between political representatives and citizens and bring them closer together, beyond a mere presence in social networks. Its founders describe this platform as the LinkedIn of politicians.

At the beginning, Kuorum.org aimed to transform the collective disappointment generated by the cases of corruption and bad government into a rescindable attitude that helps society to recover its institutions. In an interview, the CEO and co-founder of the Platform, Nso, stated that “some initiatives come from political parties and others seek to institutionalise direct democracy. Kuorum.org, on the other hand, is a citizen platform that only aims to raise awareness and keep users informed to stimulate a more responsible political action [2].

During its first, the platform focused on the publication of bills sent to the Congress of Deputies so that citizens could vote on them and propose improvements when they considered necessary. After this step, politicians with an open profile in Kuorum.org collected the proposals and present them in the congress in the form of amendments. In this way, transparency in the legislative process was enhanced and citizens collaborated in the creation and improvement of the laws, by telling politicians

the issues what issues were relevant to them. The leaders who have made a more intense use of this platform include Manuela Carmena, Mayor of Madrid, who launched a request for the Spanish legislation to include a law on the foundations of parties and movements. In her campaign to become the Mayor of Madrid, Carmena strongly defended platforms like Kuorum.org and argued that it is necessary for citizens to participate in the creation of the laws that govern the country [3]. The platform also offered the possibility for citizens to express their own ideas on a specific political project, in such a way that politicians could sponsor and develop these initiatives.

At present Kuorum.org has implemented a new phase in which it is defined as a tool to manage the influence for a new generation of leaders (<https://kuorum.org/es>). The platform no longer only allows the participation of political leaders, but also the participation of organisations, such as Oxfam Intermón and UNICEF, and corporations like IBM. In this new stage, the platform helps individuals, companies and organisations to turn their digital presence into movements into actions that have a positive impact outside of the Internet. It offers customers a Control Panel to monitor the commitment of their audiences in different social networks; and a public profile that allows them to interact with audiences through debates, surveys, petitions and events.

The platform helps politicians to find other people working in the same causes. The platform gives them access to tools to develop their digital campaign, to segment hearings and to get their messages across in the most effective way possible. Organisations are offered a place to communicate with their audience in a more direct way. They are given the option to segment their target audience to launch more specific campaigns and give each user relevant information. Kuorum.org helps companies to find their most committed stakeholders and to involve them in decision-making to increase their trust and sense of belonging so they can be turned into brand ambassadors.

Despite its social cause, Kuorum.org is not financed through subsidies or donations, but by the payment of the services they provide. Customers pay a monthly subscription to be able to use the platform. This fee allows them to send information to their audience in a segmented way, to receive data on the reception of their initiatives and to create links with their audiences.

The platform, which began to operate in Spain, has obtained a good response from the public, and has managed to expand beyond the national territory. The leaders present in Kuorum.org include various members of the British Conservative and Labour parties, which have incorporated in the platform their communicative strategies to reach their voters.

Although in this second phase, Kuorum.org moves away from the search for transparency to focus on social connectivity management associated with social networks, in its initial conception it was configured as a digital platform based on transparency. Its activity gave visibility to the processing of legal and political initiatives and engaged citizens in these processes, introducing them to the decision-making process and giving them a space to listen to and propose improvement proposals.

3.3. Wikitribune: transparent and collaborative journalism

Wikitribune is a non-profit organisation launched in May 2017 by the founder of Wikipedia, Jimmy Wales. The objective of this platform is to achieve informative transparency and to avoid the publication of fake news that may confuse citizens. Wikitribune seeks to create evidence-based and fact-checked journalistic content, free from opinion and ideological biases. “The news is broken but we figured out how to fix it”, states its website (<https://www.wikitribune.com/>).

The platform brings journalists and a large community of volunteers together to jointly improve the quality of news content. At a time when anyone can create and disseminate information on the internet, without being required to do fact-checking, the platform founded by Wales aims to focus on the facts, leaving aside the noise generated by the contradictory news that proliferate in the digital environment.

According to Wales, there are four reasons for the existence of Wikitribune. First, to expose, in a transparent way, the sources that corroborate the facts mentioned in the news. Wikitribune makes sure its journalists only write fact-based articles that have been previously reviewed. In this sense, volunteers can act as a source, provided they know what happened by first hand, or can help journalists to find these sources. In addition, anyone can flag or fix an article and submit it for review.

Second, Wikitribune is a 100% free and ad-free platform, so that all the information is free for anyone who wants to use it. There is no paywall subscription nor advertising-clicking to access contents. To finance itself the platform relies on a system of voluntary donations that let users decide how much and how often, monthly or yearly, donate to help this project.

Third, the community of users and journalists are equally important. No person is more important than the rest. Although, in most conventional media, the public only has a small space to comment on the news, in Wikitribune the community of users can play a very prominent role in news making. This way, all the articles are written and verified by professional journalists and community members who work together to improve the quality of the content that reaches the public. According to the website, the fact that they do not depend on advertisers means they only care about their readers and do not practice click-baiting.

Fourth, total transparency regarding its finances. Wikitribune is committed to publish its financials on a regular basis, so that each subscriber will be able to know where all the money goes. According to the platform, it will use its funds to pay professional journalists working on this project. In this sense, Wikitribune aims to hire at least ten journalists. The platform claims that in case it is unable to do so, it will return all the money raised to its followers.

Wikitribune aims to become a medium that “takes professional, standards-based journalism and incorporates the radical idea from the world of Wiki that a community of volunteers can and will reliably protect and improve articles” (<https://medium.com/wikitribune>).

The platform currently has 11,514 subscribers who finance the project. The advisors that are part of this platform include journalist and television critic Jeff Jarvis, attorney and academic Larry Lessig, actress and social activist Lily Cole and marketing specialist Guy Kawasaki. They will also be part of the committee that selects the topics on a daily basis.

With Wikitribune, its founder, Jimmy Wales, aims to reinvent the business model of journalism. He aims to challenge the fact that conventional media only respond to advertisers and not their audiences, prioritising those stories that get them a greater number of clicks over rigorous and quality journalism based on public interest. In addition, the project gives an essential role to audiences, who acquire the ability to generate and edit news articles, to decide which topics should be published, which used to be the exclusive role of professional journalists. The ultimate goal of this project is to guarantee the future of quality journalism.

3.4. Deba-t.org: transparency in the promotion of public debate and discussion

Deba-t.org is an independent youth platform founded in 2009 by a group of ideologically diverse students from different schools of the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. Its goal is to generate social capital through the promotion of debate on the issues that really affect today's society. To this end, they organise a series of activities mainly targeting university students, such as public lectures and debates, round tables and colloquiums.

The platform promotes the creation of different meeting points for reflection and dialogue between people with different ideological sensitivities. According to Nacho Corredor, co-founder of the initiative, “in this country it is necessary a great international debate”, so through the organisation of different activities, the association is “promoting debate and reflection environments that serve as a nexus between the political world and the university” [4].

As stated in its website (<http://www.deba-t.org/>), the organisation is governed by the values of tolerance, plurality and freedom of speech. They consider that only the inclusion of different viewpoints can enrich the intellectual and cultural patrimony of the participants. To this end, it is essential to promote the participation of citizens, and in their case students, in the analysis of political decisions and crucial issues for society through dialogue and a critical perspective. Transparency appears here as a key ingredient in achieving these objectives, while the exhibition and circulation of different ideas and points of view are established as specific activities.

To promote transparency and pluralism, Deba-t.org organises three types of activities: colloquiums, events and round tables. Colloquiums are the most characteristic and frequent format of the association. They are small meetings in which 15 partners sit down to meet a relevant character in the world of politics or journalism and exchange views on the most topical issues. They have held colloquiums with two former presidents of Catalonia's Generalitat (Artur Mas and José Montilla), journalists such as Jordi Basté and Ignacio Escolar, as well as jurists such as Santiago Vidal and Oriol Rusca, among others.

Events are open lectures to the entire university community. This type of format is usually done three times a year and usually lasts about two hours. Either live or through social networks, citizen participation is fundamental. The most noteworthy events include the pre-election debates in which candidates from the main political forces discussed issues of great social relevance. This format is also often used to discuss issues of interest to the university community, such as youth unemployment, immigration, and the U.S. presidential election.

As their name suggest, round tables capture the *late motiv* of the organisation, the debate. In them, the objective is no longer to know in depth a distinguished member of society, but to learn about a current issue, to form an opinion about it and dialogue with other attendees. These *petit committee* sessions are reserved for small groups of partners and in them everyone can express their views freely, promoting pluralism as an enriching element of human thought. The topics that have been discussed include Ukraine's conflict.

The platform already has more than 100 partners, from which the team that coordinates the association is chosen. The seven members that make up the governing board are joined by the eight members that make up the advisory council, which include the three co-founders of the association (Nacho Corredor, Gerard Sensat and Paris Grau), Catalonia's current *conceller de Salut*, Toni Comín, and the deputy of the Catalan Democratic Party (PDeCAT), Carles Campuzano. The events organised by Deba-t.org have had the participation of more than 80 personalities from the world of economics, like Xavier Sala i Martín, law, like Miquel Roca, journalism, like Àngels Barceló and Antoni Bassas, and politics, like Carles Puigdemont and Patxi López.

3.5. OpenKratio: promotion of open government and transparency

OpenKratio (formerly called *OpenData Sevilla*) is an organisation created to respond to the concerns of a group of citizens that want to improve democracy through the promotion of transparency and the principles of open government and open data.

The purpose of OpenKratio (<https://openkratio.org/>) is to create a national community of users that, through participation, collaboration and development projects within the public and political spaces, help to build a network of interests and social transformation for the improvement of democracy based on the adoption of the principles of the open movement: transparency, citizen participation in governance and re-use of public information. The aim is to improve democracy through the promotion of transparency in governments and public administrations.

The organisation believes that the information shared by governments and institutions with citizens is biased by the criteria of the administration. Its actions aim to make society aware that public information is not synonymous with open data. When the administration provides citizens with raw data, citizens can examine the data to extract the information of actual public interest.

OpenKratio collaborates with the Transparency and Good Governance Council in the development of a strategic plan to promote transparency. Specifically, the agreement signed in April 2016 focuses on

four actions [5]. First, to educate social groups on transparency and right of access to public information. Second, to participate in events and discussion forums to disseminate transparency, targeting professionals and citizen associations. Third, to collaborate to simplify the administrative procedures related to public information to make these data more accessible. And, fourth, to develop documents for the dissemination of a culture of transparency.

The most relevant projects executed by OpenKratio includes one that informs about the industrial residues that are poured in the water in Spain. The organisation also helped to draft the bill on Clear and Open Finances to the Podemos group of Andalusia. They have also become a voting authority. In other words, as advocate of the electronic voting facilitates this kind of suffrage through platforms such as AgoraVoting, ensuring the secrecy and recounting of the vote to avoid fraud.

The organisation's members defend and implement open management: They are structured horizontally with no positions. Their activity is organised and developed in the internet in a public and transparent way and the initiative is led by principles of meritocracy. In addition, OpenKratio is a non-profit, free and voluntary organisation.

3.6. Typology of citizen-driven transparency-based digital platforms

The analysis of the five cases indicates that citizen-driven transparency-based, monitoring-oriented digital platforms take a variety of forms. The criterion that allows us to establish a distinction is the main purpose of each platform and the transparency dimension covered by each platform. In this sense, we can establish a typology based on five differentiated modalities:

- a) Accountability Platforms (Osoigo): These are platforms in which an individual or a group of people monitor and oversee the actions and decisions carried out by the political power. Their objective is to use transparency, to encourage political actors to explain and justify their actions to citizens.
- b) Platforms for social and political connectivity (Kuorum.org): They allow the incorporation of citizens into political and legal procedures, such as the discussion of bills. Put differently, they try to connect citizens with the political decision-making processes and encourage direct contact between public authorities and citizens. They promote the political participation of citizens as well as greater social visibility in the processing of regulations.
- c) Platforms for collaborative journalism (Wikitribune): Are oriented to the introduction of transparency in the production of news articles. They aim to provide quality news based on the basic values of journalism and the collaboration between professional journalists and citizens. They introduce transparency in sources, verification processes and funding. They bet on issues of public interest and fight against the creation and dissemination of false news.

Table 1. Different types of citizen-driven transparency-based digital platforms

| Type | Definition | Key concept | Example |
|--|--|-----------------|-------------|
| Accountability Platforms | Their purpose is to enable citizens to monitor and oversee the political power to hold it accountable for its actions. Their aim is to force the political class to inform, explain and justify its actions so that citizens can evaluate them and act accordingly. | Accountability | Osoigo |
| Platforms for social and political connectivity | Their objective is to promote direct contact between public authorities and citizens so that they can engage in dialogue and can interact openly and transparently in political decision-making processes, such as law creation. | Interaction | Kuorum.org |
| Platforms for collaborative journalism | Their purpose is to enable professional journalists and citizens to work together to create news content of interest to society, free from political and economic biases, and to promote transparency in the making of information. | News | Wikitribune |
| Platforms for the promotion of public debate and discussion | Their objective is to promote the circulation of ideas in society. They try to apply transparency to disseminate opposing topics and views to promote the plurality of views on social problems. | Public debate | Deba-t.org |
| Platforms for the promotion of open and transparent government | Their purpose is to encourage open government through citizen access to information about the government's actions and management in a comprehensible, accessible and didactic way. For these organisations, transparency is conceived as a mechanism to prevent fraud and corruption. | Open government | OpenKratio |

d) Platforms for the promotion of public debate and discussion (Deba-t.org): They act as an agora of political, social and cultural discussion whose maxim is to open a space for dialogue and reflection on the subjects that most interest the citizenry. They incorporate transparency as a mechanism to give visibility to relevant topics of debate in society and to different viewpoints and ideas, which potentially

extend their dissemination scope. They promote plurality, tolerance and freedom of expression, which are values that improve the quality of democracy.

e) Platforms for the promotion of open and transparent government (OpenKratio): They apply transparency to enhance the development of open government. Their aim is to promote good governance, the involvement of citizens and the eradication of fraud and corruption. They pursue to provide citizens with the necessary data to know and, later, evaluate the government's actions and management in a comprehensible, accessible and didactic way. They want the right of access to public information to be the basis for the more responsible action of political institutions and want citizens to get involved in control over government to improve the management of public resources.

4. Conclusions

This research article offers an original and novel typology of civil society-driven online platforms focused on the promotion of transparency, access to public interest information and political monitoring. This proposal is a starting point endowed with an interesting analytical potential for future research focused on digital transparency.

This research work also represents an advance in the theoretical construction of the concept of monitoring since it develops its connection with transparency and presents the main ways in which the latter is manifested in its practical application in the digital context in which citizens have the protagonist role. In this way, it establishes the existing links between monitoring and transparency, understanding the former as a requirement for the activation of the latter. Thus, this work contributes to the expansion of the theory of the monitory democracy posed by Keane (2009).

Through different formats, citizen-driven online platforms enable access to public information via the activation of diverse mechanisms associated with transparency: like the recollection of open-government data, public-interest news articles, varied ideas and viewpoints, responses from political actors and procedures linked to political decision-making. These platforms contribute, potentially, to the reduction of the political disaffection that separates political representatives and citizens, to combat abuses, bad practices and corruption, and, in short, to improve the quality of democracy. They are examples of the exercise of citizen counterpower in the digital environment.

The digital context offers interesting doses of innovation in the field of transparency like the ones that have been analysed here and contribute to the transformation of the field of political communication: the new initiatives that redefine aspects of citizen political participation. This project opens up new avenues for the redefinition of the functioning of today's democracy in which the civil society assumes a new role.

- This work is part of the research project CSO2014-52283-C2-1-P financed by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Spanish Government.

5. Notes

- [1] https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/07/21/talento_digital/1500658253_369685.html
- [2] http://www.lainformacion.com/asuntos-sociales/nace-kuorum-una-plataforma-espanola-en-busca-de-una-democracia-2-0_uZLstjDCNoiDnIdNTr1Fk4/
- [3] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlJKrQf9Oww>
- [4] <http://www.elperiodico.cat/ca/gent/20130409/deba-torg-celebra-4-anys-2360023>
- [5] http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Transparencia-protocolo-colaboracion-OpenKratio-sensibilizar_0_504999981.html

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