



SPECIAL REPORT

Conclusions of the World Summit on Political Communication in Santo Domingo

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1. INTRODUCTION
 2. KEYS TO DOMINICAN SUMMIT
 3. POWER TO THE CITIZENRY
 4. WITH THE HALLMARK OF EL
BRONCO
 5. THE END OF IDEOLOGIES
 6. CONCLUSION
- AUTHORS

I. INTRODUCTION

Ecuador, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia and, more recently, the Dominican Republic have been the scenario where the World Summit on Political Communication has succeeded in gathering the best consultants, politicians and stakeholders in communicating the art of the possible.

The Summit has become a rallying point where a plurality of voices and a multiplicity of political ideas and ideologies coexist. It has changed through the seven editions into the greatest event for those who constantly seek updates, examples, success stories and innovative techniques in terms of election campaigns.

The Summit, as Daniel Ivoskus –its promoter and the president of the International Organizing Committee– points out, is meant for public, private and governmental communication actors in general. “We try to gather leading political consultants of all around the world with years of research and reflections behind them, but also with expertise within the field. We hold that this Summit is the perfect marriage between academy and empirical knowledge thanks to the report and development of successful and unsuccessful stories”.

Politics are not a game of chance, but a strategic game board. Apart from training, experience is also needed to design winning strategies. In the world of political communication, it is vital to interact and discuss with the actors in the field: politicians, consultants, pollsters and journalists.

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2. KEYS TO DOMINICAN SUMMIT

The Summit of the Dominican Republic has substantially contributed from the first conference, when Daniel Ivoskus addressed the impact of social networks in electoral processes: he maintained that media paradigms can be changed with them, and he highlighted their participatory role and ability to generate public opinion as well.

Along these lines, the Argentinian consultant, Angel Becassino, delved deeper into Ivoskus' concepts, and noted that “social networks, despite being a great communication channel, are not able to create changes by themselves. Their role essentially relies on amplifying the voice of society, showing messages, but not changing attitudes”.

Becassino, who is specialized in youth vote and audiences, became one of the speakers who addressed the most the theme of youth and politics. In this context, he explained the significance for candidates to find windows of opportunity reflecting the issues that really matter to young audiences, but without forgetting that each region, each place, has a background and a youth population profile with differing characteristics.

In this respect, the Argentinian Diego Diéguez Ontiveros developed a comprehensive analysis of the youth vote,

based on a clear call on political leaders to start sharing spaces with young people instead of underestimating them, especially in Latin America, where this range of young people represents the most vulnerable population in the continent.

The Colombian Mauricio De Vengoechea also partly agreed with Ivoskus when admitting that the importance of a campaign hangs on captivating public opinion: “Certainly, who conquers the conversations of public arena positively, coming to be the most charismatic candidate, becomes the strongest and best able to generate the greatest alliances. Who starts to fill empty spaces with a clear well-defined strategy, is ultimately who triumphs”.

The Spanish Yago de Marta agreed in considering that public opinion must be also conquered, but from another point of view; that is, telling stories, promoting captivating emotive distinctive stories, with a strong message: “Traditional speeches no longer surprise anyone and are not understood by a part of the society”, he insisted.

The Peruvian Dimas Concha focused also on emotion. He spoke about creating incentives for being able to generate the intended responses, although he also emphasized the importance of an intelligent previous research: “It is vital to segment properly the types of audiences in each election scene, study in depth their spaces for

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interaction, expression codes, worries and claims, which are particular not only in each country or city, but in each district where the campaign is being pursued”, he declared.

It is imperative that messages are strong and lasting, so that they can link with citizenry, generating insight mainly through emotions, as the Peruvian explains.

3. POWER TO THE CITIZENRY

Toni Puig, a renowned Spanish idea-man, creator of Marca Ciudad Barcelona –city branding–, was once again a crucial participant in the Summit, contributing with his point of view on civic participation with regard to generating public policies.

In his remarks, he addressed to the way he is reaching the political power through citizens’ associations, with examples such as Ada Colau or Manuela Carmena, who were elected at May local elections the mayor of Barcelona and Madrid, respectively, without having a consolidated political career or a hallmark rooted in time.

These milestones have been achieved, according to Puig, starting out with an inclusive public communication, whose purpose can be none other than prompting citizens to collaborate actively with governments. In particular with local ones: “City Councils must

be the public space for citizenry. That must be its core mission. Political leaders should build an on-going dialogue with people, asking them for the city they wish to build and engaging them in participating actively in it”, Puig stressed.

4. WITH THE HALLMARK OF EL BRONCO

Certainly, one of the greatest attractions of this VII World Summit on Political Communication was the exposition of Memo Rentería. He is the idea-man that led the campaign of El Bronco – Jaime Rodríguez – for Nuevo León’s governor, who finally was elected by citizenry with a particular milestone: he obtained his victory outside the traditional power structures in Mexico, such as PRI or PAN, and within the framework of a very low-cost campaign.

Of course Rentería carried out hundreds of low-cost campaigns in Latin America, because that is in fact one of his specialties. He referred to this topic in his lecture in Santo Domingo. “Campaigns should come from the heart, not from reasoning, without broadcasting commercials on TV or in the radio, without conducting any survey or producing any promotional material. It is all about being irreverent, questioning traditional models of campaigns and speaking out to society. That was what gave us the victory in Nuevo León”, Rentería admitted.

“In this context, a new player emerges: the amphibian politician”

Well then, how achieve such direct contact with citizens, replacing the massive arrival of traditional media? El Bronco's example is as crucial as simple: a mobile phone open to every call, and a fluid personal contact through social networks.

El Bronco admitted –once Rentería's exposition ended– that “the equation was very simple: with no economic resources, we have no other way but using a real emotional discourse to gain closeness, and new technologies as the basis elements to establish contact”. In this respect, he pointed out to discard another standard practice: according to the new governor, social networks shouldn't be managed by advisers, but by the candidates themselves. He claimed that only in this way it is possible to really know the people's feeling and obtain an individualized personal contact.

5. THE END OF IDEOLOGIES

The conference of the Spanish Antonio Sola, who is one of the most influential consultants in the world, was the most transgressive and challenging in the framework of the Dominican Summit.

Since it ensured the birth of a new era and the death of the time of traditional politics, as

he understands it: “Ideologies, which during decades enslaved citizens, are no longer at the fore. Leadership comes with people who currently succeed without necessarily belonging to a party or ideology, as it was understood traditionally”.

In this context, a new player emerges: the amphibian politician, who is undergoing a transformation, adapting to an evolving reality. “This constantly evolving scenario is mostly the result of social networks, which led to a generation of enabled citizens, who interact in such communication platforms”, he added.

As a counterpoint, the Spanish highlighted the need to create a legal framework that establishes a regulation for protecting social network's users, otherwise the possibility that such media become platform for defamation and violation of rights comes enhanced.

6. CONCLUSION

Amid strategies, new technologies and ways of communicating in election processes, the concept of reputation should be present under the umbrella of ethics. This is a new paradigm that involves leaders' closeness, transparency and more responsibility, which in fact are the example of every society.

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Daniel Ivoskus is specialist in local economic development and public marketing. He has a Masters in Local Economic Development (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and General San Martín National University) and a Degree in Marketing (University of Palermo). He is also the president of the International Organizing Committee, an associate consultant of the Centro Interamericano de Gerencia Política (US), professor of the UNSAM and lecturer in the Masters in Communication Management and New Technologies of the University of Oviedo (Principality of Asturias, Spain).

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