



UTBLICK



A MAGAZINE
ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES



ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY
IN A CHANGING WORLD

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EDITORS' LETTER

✉ This year we are facing an enormous amount of elections. One of the most important aspects of a democracy is elections, free and fair elections is what gives voice to our societies. Earlier this year we have seen Putin's reelection in Russia, and also Hungary and Poland's move towards nationalistic politics and anti-european governments. Since previously we have already witnessed the low voting participation in France's elections, Germany's struggle with building a government, the victory of Trump in the US. But not to forget some positive trends in democracy as the surprisingly peaceful resignation of Zimbabwe's long ruling leader Mugabe, that now will lead up to a parliamentary election later this year. As well as the formation of new political parties, like the Demokraterna in Gothenburg, who is claiming to be neither left or right and the left wing Podemos in Spain, just to mention a few. So we thought it would be the right time to explore the concept of elections and a myriad of issues entailed to it, especially with the upcoming Swedish election that will be held in September.

We wanted to look at elections in a wider spectrum and from different countries and cultures. So in this number of Utblick we hope you will learn about some of the elections which are taking place this year and some trends we are witnessing in the world right now. Such as the worrying lack of participation of the young generation in elections or the disconnect between society and politicians. This has brought to life alternatives like e-democracy initiatives such as DigidemLab.

This is not to undermine national election issues, such as the coming mexican election, which is believed to shake the country's policies. As well as the need to critically review parliamentary and presidency laws that might be discriminatory, such as the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Or democratic retreats, like in Cambodia.

So, in this issue we have compiled these and many more articles and topics that we hope you will enjoy.

We wish you a pleasant and critical reading,

Moa Persson and Ariadna Carrascosa
moa.persson@utblick.org, ariadna.carrascosa@utblick.org

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WORLD'S 2018 ELECTIONS GUIDE

Ariadna Carrascosa

AMERICA

COSTA RICA - February 4, April 1 (second round)

Carlos Alvarado (centre-left) won over Fabricio Alvarado (conservative), an evangelical preacher, one-time TV journalist and Christian music singer. The debate was focused on the national deficit, the rise of the murder rate and especially over the legalising of same-sex marriage.

CUBA - April 19

The winner of the presidential election was Miguel Díaz-Canel. It is the first time that the position is held not by a historical revolutionary.

PARAGUAY - 22 April

After the election with more abstentionism, Abdo Benítez won the elections by little, which means a continuation in power of the right wing Partido Colorado, party which was a supporter of Alfredo Stroessner's dictatorship (1954-1989).

VENEZUELA - May 20

Maduro will run again. Main opposition is Henri Falcón, that faces the challenge of convincing the people (that distrust the process) to vote.

COLOMBIA - May 27

Germán Vargas (from the current ruling party, which has a good reputation). Timochenko from the FARC also running for office.

Two candidates with big city mayoral experience are figuring in polls – Sergio Fajardo (Medellín, centre-left) and Gustavo Petro (Bogotá, leftist) – and a candidate will emerge from a right-wing coalition with the likely backing of former President Álvaro Uribe.

MEXICO - July 1

The country faces “the biggest election in Mexican History” as will probably mean a redefinition of economic development, trade, security and energy. Andres Manuel

Lopez Obrador (a.k.a) AMLO, often described as left wing and populist, is the most likely to become president by the opinion polls.

BRAZIL - October 7

Impeachment of Dilma Rouseff, later imprisonment of previous president Lula (from the same party), but apparently as of now, would win if allowed to run. The other hot names are right wing politician Jair Bolsonaro and environmentalist Marina Silva.

EUROPE

ITALY - March 4

The Five Star Movement was the largest single party, founded by comedian Beppe Grillo, has been qualified as anti-establishment, populist, environmentalist and an advocate of e-democracy and direct democracy. Right wing Lega party made it from the regional arena to the nationwide vote. However, the turn out was a very fragmented Parliament that is in need of a coalition to make up a government.

RUSSIA - March 18.

Putin won and opponent Alexei Navalny was prohibited from running due to a trumped-up criminal charge (although would not have won).

HUNGARY - April 8

Viktor Orbán from the right wing coalition, won the elec-

tions with a wide majority. This will be his third term as Prime Minister. Campaign focused on an anti immigration message.

SWEDEN - September 9

Opinion polls show a tight victory by the centre-left Social Democrats, closely followed by the liberal-conservative Moderates, also in dispute with the right wing Swedish Democrats. Three of the seven parties in the Parliament might lose their seats for not being able to get over the four percentage barrier the Swedish Parliament has. Immigration is being one of the most pressing issues.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - October 7

After the Bosnian war (1992-1995) a very unique system was set. The presidency consists of 3 members, one Serb, one Bosniak and one Croat. EU and the US have call for a change in electoral legislation due to the fear that the results cannot be implemented, and therefore, it would make more difficult to form a govern.

ASIA

NEPAL - March 13

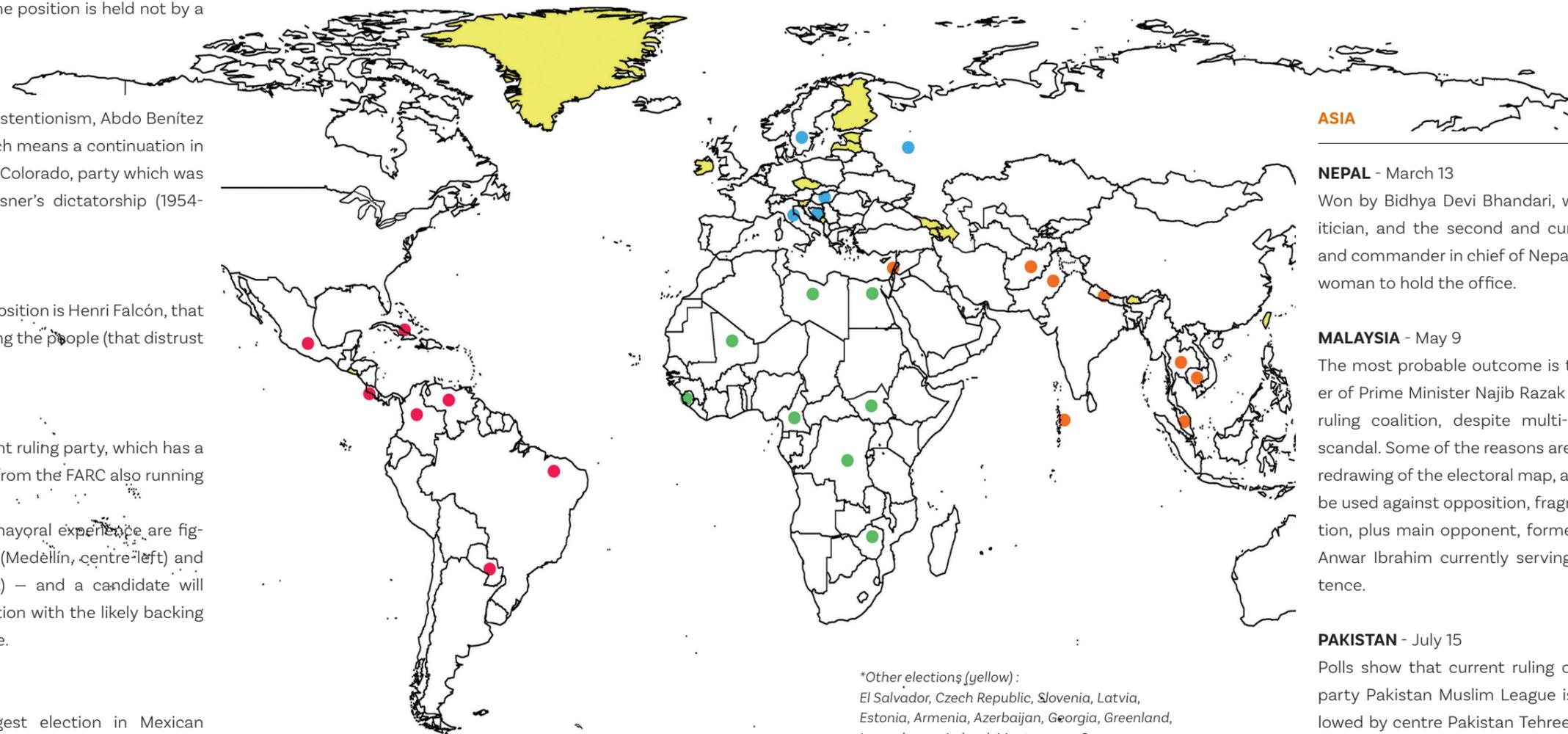
Won by Bidhya Devi Bhandari, who is a communist politician, and the second and current President of Nepal and commander in chief of Nepalese Army. She is the first woman to hold the office.

MALAYSIA - May 9

The most probable outcome is the continuation in power of Prime Minister Najib Razak and his Barisan Nasional ruling coalition, despite multi-billion dollar corruption scandal. Some of the reasons are the recent approval of a redrawing of the electoral map, a “fake news act” that can be used against opposition, fragmentation of the opposition, plus main opponent, former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim currently serving a five-year prison sentence.

PAKISTAN - July 15

Polls show that current ruling centre-right conservative party Pakistan Muslim League is ahead in the polls, followed by centre Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party, founded by former national cricket captain Imran Khan. In third place stands centre-left Pakistan Peoples Party.



*Other elections (yellow):
El Salvador, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Latvia,
Estonia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Greenland,
Luxembourg, Ireland, Montenegro, Cyprus,
Finland, Taiwan and Bhutan.

CAMBODIA - July 29

Parliament election. Hun Sen from the leading party CPP, Cambodia Peoples Party have had the power since 1985 but only democratic elections since 1993 . The CPP and Hun Sen got reappointed by parliament in September 2013 for a further five-year term, in the face of mass demonstrations and opposition allegations of fraud in the July elections. The country's only significant opposition party was dissolved by the Supreme Court in 2017.

AFGHANISTAN - October 20

Parliamentary elections after a delay of three years. Afghan government and the Talibans close to negotiations, but unsure if there would be an agreement and how it could be. There have been deadly suicide bombings in voters registration centers. Presidential elections due in 2019.

THAILAND - postponed until february 2019

The military has ruled for most of the period since 1947, with a few democratically elected government periods in between. The latest military coup took place in 2014. The next election was supposed to be held in November 2018, but has been postponed until February 2019.

LEBANON - May

Lebanese are voting in the Parliamentary elections after delay of 9 years. Unexpected high participation from Lebanese living abroad. But there is general scepticism.

MALDIVES - September

President Yemeen has removed all of his rivals by convicting them on questionable charges. He is expected to change the law in order to be able to stay in office past the maximum of two terms.

AFRICA

SIERRA LEONE - March 7-31

Julius Maada Bio has won the elections. He is a former young soldier and part of the coup of 1992 that installed a military junta. He got the power in 1996 but stepped aside to let a civilian rule.

EGYPT - March 26-28

After facing six tumultuous years that include the overthrow of Mubarak, and a coup d'état that the first elected president, Morsi had to face after 2 years in power. Both of them are jailed. Autocrat Abdel Fattah el-Sisi took the reigns and has stifled protests and banned the Muslim Brotherhood since then. He has been elected to continue in the position.

CAMEROON - April 5

Senatorial elections in which the ruling party acquired 90% of the seats. Presidential elections later this year date tba. Current president Paul Biya is expected to seek to continue in power after 30 years in charge. Secessionists have taken arms to fight for independence.

MALI - April to November

Former Prime Minister Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga resigned in December 2017 and it was succeeded by Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who is seeking re-election. Opposition is by Kalifa Sanogo, which used to be part of Keita's parliamentary group but unexpectedly started a separate presidential campaign.

SOUTH SUDAN - July

Currently in civil war, elections are proving to be difficult to happen.

ZIMBABWE - (July-Aug?)

Just deposed dictator Mugabe but elected Emmerson Mnangagwa in November 2017, from Zanu PF, a party complicit with Mugabe.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO - December 23

Dictator Joseph Kabila has outstayed his term limit for over a year now. The election, originally scheduled for late 2016, has been repeatedly delayed.

LYBIA - TBA

Presidential elections are not yet scheduled. There is political division and conflict. It is being debated whether to hold elections before or after agreeing on a new and permanent constitution. It would be the first constitution since 1969.

BACK TO THE BALLOTS

TeHilla Maloney

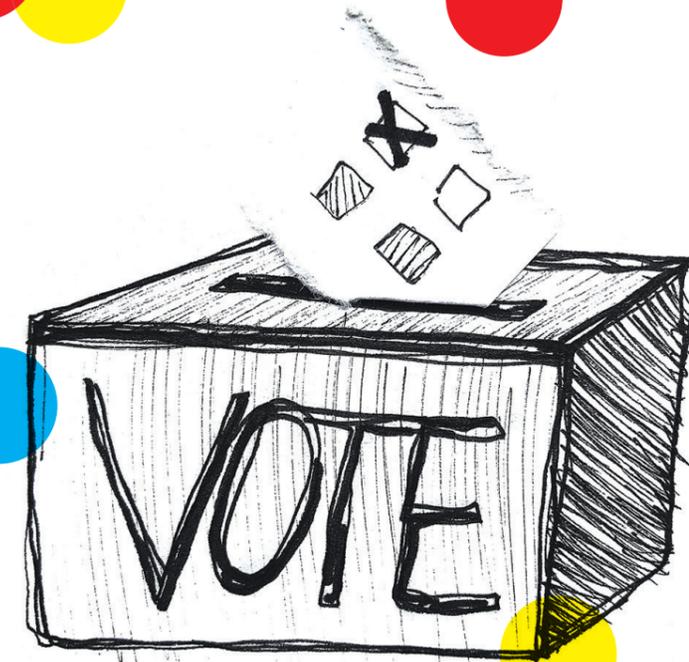


Illustration: Saana Kujala-John

After numerous recent elections within our century, the cry goes up that the youth are not voting. Less than half of millennials in Britain, more than four-fifths in America and two-thirds of Swiss youth have decided to forgo the polls between 2014-2015. Whilst political scientists, psychologists and anybody with an opinion speculate about this phenomenon, western millennials remain stationary, convinced that the lack of political participation is a viable form of protest.

However, this 'method' is failing all of us. It alienates our demands and takes away the power that many of our ancestors have fought to give us. Politicians, aware of our lack of participation, use our social platforms to sensationalise their campaigns, but do not expect much more out of our disenchanted age strata. Today, the forces of globalization and technology are heightening awareness and increasing connectivity between people and cultures everywhere. The ability to witness natural disasters, acts of terror, civil conflicts and wars in real time has evoked global sympathy

in the hearts of youth everywhere. Unfortunately, most of these happenings are not balanced throughout the world-view. Hunger, wars, emigration and famine are not exactly aligned with the G20 countries. Even though events such as these seem to be out of young hands, who we put into power can reflect how we want to be represented in spheres that do make the important decisions regarding these issues. According to UNESCO, the youth literacy rate at the global level was 91% in 2013, compared to an adult literacy rate of 85%. However, the Brookings Institution present that in terms of education, developing countries are 100 years behind developed countries. To add insult to injury, Conteh and Ohemeng suggest that policy and decision making in developing countries is externally driven. Despite these facts proving that the youth of the first world are the most educated, empowered and aware group within our societies, they are still leaving some of the most important representative political decisions up to a smaller, older majority through lack of conventional political action.

Our all-inclusive democratic system has not yet expanded its inclusivity to our facebook posts, twitter mentions and Insta-stories. Discrimination, the economy, gun violence and the environment are hot topics being discussed at our round tables, but not the roundtable. We are social media spokespeople, but even with the use of our new repertoires of contention, it is still important for us to affect change through the civil duty of voting. It is vital that we ensure that our issues are perceived as relevant to those who determine the course of our social, economic and educational lives.

poor (majority coming from our regions) has increased by 2.5 million people between 2016-2017. The only things keeping many of us afloat are the many social provisions being made available to us by our governments. With the encroachment of the IMF, WTO and other Bretton Woods institutions threatening to remove many of these systems in our developing countries, why aren't the educated and empowered zealous to keep these systems in place? Why, with the pervasion of global sympathy, aren't the western youth aware of their potency within national and international politics?

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I am originally from the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, but I study in Jamaica. Writing from the developing country perspective, the word 'democracy' often comes bagged with its Aristotelian definition of 'mob' rule. Our voting systems in Caribbean countries such as Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and those from the African continent are laced with boldfaced corruption and an uneducated public majority. Our poverty now, is not poverty 10 years ago. As reported by the WorldBank, the global

To me, the voters within G20 countries have untapped supplementary power. The voters of the developed world often vote not just for themselves, but for our countries who are duly affected due to their periphery positions in the world order.

Soon, worldwide, millennials will make up the largest voting bloc in various elections. This will not matter if you don't get up, get out, and vote. ■

DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN AGE OF TECHNOLOG

A critical think piece regarding the evolution of technology and our formal institutions' functional failures in a contemporary setting.

Parwa Sadik

representing Feministiska juriststudenter vid Handelshögskolan



There's a particular form of panic that comes over people when long-held beliefs are shaken. I suppose it has something to do with the sense of security we tend to feel in knowledge we have taken to be true for a long time, and the realization that our understanding of things are never really 'complete'. Although this latent realization can be humbling and a little painful, I believe it often aids as a catalyst for change in areas we have left alone for too long. Such is the case, I would say, in how recent events are challenging our fundamental understanding of modern technology and its effects on our democracy, among other things.

The truth is that our world has already begun transitioning from one epoch to another; the leading cause of this metamorphosis being technological development. Information has never flowed this freely before as it does now on the Web, and while that may have its benefits, it has also had consequences just now beginning to dawn for the common man. I allude here to the highly controversial Cambridge

Analytica-case which has pushed the boundaries of what we have considered a 'functioning' democracy for so long. What I deem of note in this scenario, however, is how it has left legislators and courts of law actively asking themselves what to do about these new technological advances, to which the answer - so far - has apparently been 'nothing'.

The entire world watched as US Congress interviewed the top official of the Facebook conglomerate and, quite frankly, failed to grasp the very fundamentals of the technology at hand. A terrified billionaire sat at the disposal of this highly regarded institution for 10 hours in total and made it out of the fire with nothing more than 'yes, ma'am's and 'no, sir's and the occasional 'I'll get back to you on that's. This development should be leaving us terrified, more so than any form of voter fraud or 'cheating'. The existence of private entities meant to identify and sway voters through malicious use of data is already a disaster; but that we have yet to develop any form of tools to even begin reacting to such an attack is a bigger problem.

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What we fail to realize is that our long-held establishments are no longer needed to provide a forum of discussion or set the framework for ‘civilized discourse’. Where we have shut out individuals and ideologies we have deemed dangerous enough to taboo in our traditional spaces, others have now created their own. In such a domain as exists now, there is no such thing as a true argumentative exchange; anyone that has ever argued with an ‘online troll’ could tell you as such. One of the reasons why we put weight in political debates is to see which candidate can fact-check the other and prove themselves more knowledgeable across a range of issues. What we face now is an oddity in that we become exposed to countless exchanges in a short period of time without the assurity of things bring in their proper context.

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To use a focused example, if we state that the constitutional framework for Swedish parliamentary elections sets them as being free and direct, we must ask ourselves in what capacity our institutions have acted to protect these rules in a modern setting. This because it is of note that while the conventional electoral campaign is typically carried out by way of live-broadcasted debates and interviews, we are now witnessing the dawn of a new form of political operation.

Hinging heavily on online hubs such as Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook, this new breed serves to provide alternate flows of information created and spread for political purposes. We recognize this form of discourse in, for example, Facebook groups that serve as launchpads for a larger number of like-minded digital users. These social networking hubs often denigrate to public forums used to insult and smear political dissenters, and yet again we have responded with ‘nothing’. We decide to dismiss these interactions, denoting the activity as recreational or humorous; because after all, it is *just the Internet*.

I suppose the most frustrating question one has to ask oneself is why, if the actions undertaken in the online domain would not be tolerated (or even legal) in the offline domain, have we still done nothing? The answer must be that we have yet to come to grasps with the fact that social media is a reflection of our society that simply works on a different plane than the one we’re used to. The event that simple hashtags like #MeToo could spread online and have such a large political impact on global society is proof of that. Logically then, it must fall to us to find some form of standard and stability in the online domain.

Otherwise, our authorities will remain sitting on their hands not knowing how to even begin solving the task at hand, and we will be left without protection in spaces we have no idea how to navigate. If cooperation from these social media platforms is out of the equation, as it evidently is, then we must quickly adapt to this rapidly changing world and find appropriate measures to respond. Only then can we begin to reinstate the integrity of the democratic voter, and only then can we push our society forward. ■

THE 15-M MOVEMENT, DIGIDEM LAB AND THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY

Frida Åberg



☞ **In a representative democracy the elected politicians should represent the people. All the same, members of political parties do not tend to represent the actual population in terms of gender, age, heritage etc. Imagining a veritable representative democracy would require a society without power dynamics and discrimination, which is not true for the world of today. The discrepancy between the people who govern and the people who are governed has, in many countries, led to a political dissatisfaction and a call for participatory democracy. Even more so when governments elected in democratic elections end up restricting political opposition, citizen participation and freedom of speech.**

In May 2011, one week before local elections, demonstrations against political corruption, welfare cuts, unemployment and democratic deficit, gathered tens of thousands of people on the Puerta del Sol square in Madrid. Slogans such as “*They don’t represent us*” and “*We are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers*” defined what became the 15-M movement. The 15-M movement used innovative online strategies and social media to gather and organize people, which enabled people at the Puerta del Sol square to continue the discussion even when the actual protests

had ended. This led to the formation of the left-wing, anti-austerity party Podemos. The party was formed with the aim to apply what they called grassroots democracy, which in their view stood in contrast to what Spanish politics had been like in the preceding years. They described themselves as a party of political renewal. Podemos was later elected in the Madrid city municipality thus breaking up the two-party system that had dominated Spanish politics for years. One part of this political renewal has been exploring participatory budgeting through online tools. On a free software website, citizens can propose and decide how to spend part of the city’s budget. When proposals are found to be viable and reach enough votes, they must be enforced (a clear difference to citizen-proposals in Sweden where politicians always have the final decision). As the 15-M movement critiqued politics of not representing the people, taking the democratic process online was a way of giving citizens direct influence on decision-making.

Neither direct democracy or participatory budgets are new phenomena, but rather part of a global trend where new technical solutions to the participatory issues of representative democracy are coming forth all over the world. Spain is one example, Iceland, Brazil and France are other countries experimenting with participatory budgets and

digital tools to increase citizens' influence in decision-making processes. In Sweden the most common way of working with participatory budgets has been to let people prioritize how a certain amount of a municipality budget should be spent. Often the proposals regard the design of parks, where to build a new school or the organizing of cultural events. As of today two participatory budget processes have been carried out in two district administrations in Gothenburg, and another one is active right now.

The Gothenburg-based non-profit organisation Digidem Lab is a resource center for civil society organisations, wanting to gather and support people who are interested in exploring new digital tools and methods for collective intelligence and participation. Anna Sanne Göransson, community manager and project coordinator, and Sanna Ghotbi, project coordinator and event manager, took the time to answer a few questions regarding digital tools for participation and the future of democracy:

What is Digidem Lab and how did it all start?

Anna Sanne: We looked around and saw something missing. Sanna has been a city council member in Gothenburg

and grew tired of how hierarchal the system is and how little the citizens are involved in political decisions. Petter (Petter Joelson, Project coordinator and product developer, author's remark) ran a webcoop with NGO clients but all they ordered was ordinary homepages while he knew there were many organisational tools and platforms that could change the whole process of a campaign or an organisation. I had worked for a long time with youth democracy projects in poor and stigmatized areas of Gothenburg. But it felt like pretend democracy, as if not really meant to be applied to real issues or actually give means to affect change in society. So basically we all saw these other ways to go about democracy.

Sanna: We are very inspired by what has happened in other countries. The last years a global movement for democracy has been growing. We can see it all the way from Europe with the Spanish municipalist movement to the Middle East with the autonomous region Rojava. The economic crisis that hit several European countries, created a critical mass of people who were tired of evictions, unemployment, water and electricity being privatised and the school and health care system being eroded.

They took to the streets and then later the local governments, where they started to move the power to the people. These movements actually change the system in practice, which really inspires me and shows that change is possible. What these movements have taught us is that we need to use both digital and face-to-face methods in order to be where the people are and reach all groups in society.

What do you think democracy will be like in the future?

Anna Sanne: Futuristic democracy... Well it can go either way right? It can be a fake word to legitimize wars and systems that have little or nothing to do with democracy or, as we already see happening, it can be taken seriously. I'd like to think that we will take advantage of all the possibilities we have in this day and age and do better. We really

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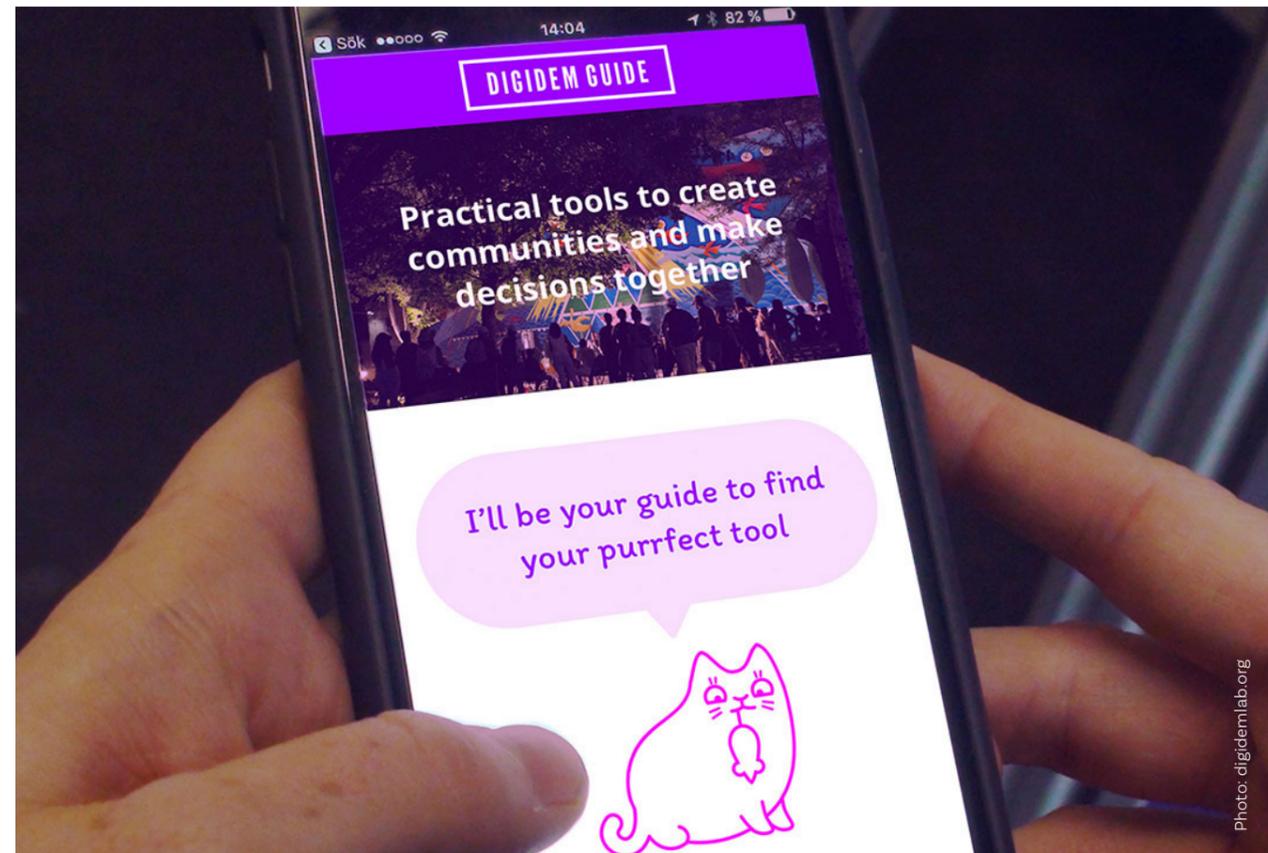
Anna Sanne: We want to create a civic tech community in Sweden because we think that it is missing. We want a place where people from the programming or hacker community meet the activist or organisational community and designers and researchers and essentially everyone who wants to be in this process of upgrading democracy. In the future we want all cities to be democratic cities. As an everyday person in these cities you can make cognitive contributions to the decisions that affect you, public services are delivered dynamically, and collective intelligence with your fellow-citizens fits in the palm of your hand.

need the collective intelligence and experience of the majority to come through with great solutions. I would like Sweden to be inspired by Taiwan and Spain and start using both online and face to face tools for direct democracy, creating participatory budgets, places where you can submit proposals, where you can give opinions on legislation, where you can get clear information about what is happening in your community and who to turn to when you want answers.

How does direct democracy through internet-based solutions, work?

Anna Sanne: Well, if we look at different movements internationally we can see how successful the use of digital tools and platforms have been for the future of democracy. For example, in cities such as Madrid, Paris, and Reykjavik they created participatory budgets with the help of online platforms where citizens could submit proposals. In Taiwan and Brazil, digital tools have helped grass-root movements to organise and engage citizens. A tool can never replace active work from the organisers to engage citizens and ensure a good representation of the population. However, these platforms can help a lot with logistics and information. They also give precious insights in the demographics of the processes, allowing organisers to detect unequal distribution of the money and correct it.

The public dissatisfaction with democratic institutions in many countries, evidenced by protests and social movements such as the 15-M movement, is a fact. When citizens get to submit and vote for their own proposals, get to distribute and prioritize in a budget, a deeper understanding of how a society is governed can be achieved. Online tools for increasing participation can also be a way of involving citizens in decision-making processes in between elections. However, questions remain regarding whether you really reach all groups in society by enabling electronic voting and moving the political discussion online. Structural injustices between groups remain and even though digital tools have taken the discussion of how to involve more people in democratic processes forward, we still have a long way to go. Even so, is it not an interesting thought to imagine not being represented by politicians, but representing ourselves directly?





SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE'S POLITICAL INFLUENCE:

Can a comedy show influence the presidential elections and change the voters' preferences?

Emma Smedberg



14

By taking the inner, complex world of politics and turning it into something that everyone, no matter what social class you belong to, can find entertaining and relatable is something that Saturday Night Live has been doing since its very start in 1975.

The show has been one of the leading late-night television shows in the United States for over four decades, and for just as long, it has played a crucial part in the political landscape. First and foremost, it is a comedy show; but like many others, I also think of it just as much as a social commentary on different political issues. To highlight what is important in an election, the show utilizes humor to get viewers and the media to perceive a certain topic as more important than another. It has become a voice in politics, and it has been tough to find a balance between politics and humour for the show, which I believe both the team behind Saturday Night Live and the public became quite aware of during the 2016 presidential election.

The show was given the term "The Saturday Night Live Effect" after the influence the show has been having on

the viewer's political opinions in the country. From Chevy Chase's impersonation of President Gerald Ford in 1975 to Kate McKinnon as candidate Hillary Clinton during the last election, there is no doubt that the show has been at least a source of influence by forming the public's perception with satire and humour. People who do not actively follow the news or understand the U.S. political system have admitted that their knowledge and understanding of politics has increased thanks to late-night television shows such as Saturday Night Live. By watching political comedy shows, earlier studies have proven that it can also encourage people to form their own political opinions rather than just following the traditional news sources. As Dean Obeidallah, a political commentator, said to Politico: "Eighty million people watched the debate, 130 million people will vote, 50 million others are still looking for places to get their news, and comedy can fill that gap".

To prove to their voters that they're in on the joke, and to show that they can laugh at themselves too, politicians have used Saturday Night Live since its very start as a way to work around traditional media.

That explains why Trump decided to host one episode of the 2015 season. By using entertainment media, presidential candidates also take the opportunity to show other sides of themselves and to reach a different, mostly younger, group of voters. Trump was the first political candidate who hosted an episode in the show's history; there had only been cameo roles or brief appearances in sketches before. His episode, where he only had twelve minutes of screentime was seen by many as a double standard from the writers part. The show is known for leaning towards the liberal agenda, which is one of the reasons why the booking of Trump was a surprise to many people. NBC, the network who broadcast the show, had just recently cut ties with Trump after his comments on the Latino community

As more and more people are watching the show's sketches and parodies online on social media, the "Saturday Night Live effect" will most likely increase. For example, during the 2016 presidential campaign, several of the show's reenactments of the debates between Clinton and Trump got over 20 million views on the show's YouTube channel. Where mainstream media such as Fox News, CNN and Washington Post actively commented and analyzed the show weekly during the election, it sparked the national debate even further. It speaks high volumes that even Trump tweeted negatively about one of the parodies of him, and it demonstrates even further that it is important in the political candidacy which direction Saturday Night Live is taking every week.

" It is important in the political candidacy which direction Saturday Night Live is taking every week. "

where he had said that Mexico was sending criminals to the U.S., and that he was planning on building a wall across the southern border. The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda sent a letter to NBC when it was announced that Trump would be hosting one of the episodes. Parts of it said: ". . . We are appalled that you would enable Trump's hateful speech for nothing less than a ratings ploy and ask that you rescind the SNL invitation".

Some cast members, such as Taran Killam, have explained how they had a difficult time with being a part of the endorsement of Trump hosting. Killam revealed in an interview with Conan O'Brien: ". . . it's really hard to have played a part in ... offering a platform for, promoting for someone who I find I'm constantly disappointed in". However, I believe that the political message has been pretty clear afterwards with the writer's perception of Trump and his administration, even if the show's creator Lorne Michaels dismisses the assumption that the show chooses political sides. The show has continued to mock the President since he was elected, and I believe that the show is definitely aware of its ability to hide their political messages "behind the veil of comedy".

I don't believe that the show will alone have the power to determine who wins or loses an election. However, there is no doubt that the show has shaped the national debate in politics across the country throughout its nearly forty-three year old run. As thanks to its large following, the show is at stake when it comes to its relevance as a political satire during the upcoming 2020 presidential election. We should not, especially not now, underestimate the political power the show has. ■

Further readings:

See the study "From Funny Features to Entertaining Effects: Connecting Approaches to Communication Research on Political Comedy" by Becker & Waisanen (2013).

To watch one of the sketches of the debates, search "Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton Debate Cold Open - SNL" on Youtube.

If you want more information about this subject, read "Political Impersonations on Saturday Night Live during the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election" by Outi J. Hakola (2017)

15

INK ON FINGER

A Commentary on Jamaican Politics.

Shakira Mills

It has been a topical conversation that the educated younger generation do not partake in the voting process. One then wonders, why could this be. Is it because they see no reason to be torn in between a green (Jamaica Labour Party) and an orange (People's National Party) world? Or could it just be that these millennials are no longer blinded by nice apparel, articulate vocabulary, and bribery trinkets? Moreover, it could be the fact that even though change has been made from a Colony to the achievement of Independence, the leaders have failed to create progressive transformation.

Why should we vote, when we are not given any plausible reason to? There is no difference between the two prominent parties. They do the same things. Carry out a project for five years then leave it hanging when someone else takes over the threshold.

And that's really a positive outlook, when compared to certain politicians who plant their behind on reclining chairs in offices for four and half years. Then begin to act all frantic within six months to fix roads and stop the leaking coming from the school roof that serves a small district.

Not to mention, dipping my finger in ink that stains for a couple of days, just to hear that you have racked up a phone bill over millions of dollars. While there are children that cannot be educated in a tertiary institution because they don't have thousands of dollars.

We can only hope that the these 'important' conversations were held with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), standing up as a nationalist and saying no, Sweet Jamaica cannot afford to be in any more debt. We are done! Or even better, a long talk with the Queen laying out the specifications for reparations.

For that could be the only way in which our votes could be considered.

*You Mister Big Man,
Why you want me to vote?*

*Because is election time,
And you want to secure your seat.*

No! Really?

*Mister Suit and Tie,
Why must I vote?*

*Because your party is in lead,
And you must get a chair.*

A chair.

*To sit in the House of Parliament,
Grin your teeth,
Make some noise,
And then go home to sleep,
On your Fifteen Thousand Thread Count
Egyptian Cotton Sheet.*

*While your constituency,
Lays their heads on cold concrete,
Not knowing what tomorrow's meals may be.*

*Ink on my finger,
Oh no,
Please.*

*So Mister Big Man,
What I voting for again?*

*Corruption or Progression,
Cause I'm really confused at the end.*

No seriously!

*Mister Suit and Tie,
Just tell me why?*

*Because don't get wrong,
I love my Jamaica.*

*I just can't bother with how you looking
like you doing me a favor.*

*My cry is not me,
But for he,
Who can't see through his blood lineage,
Bleeding green.
Orange his team.*

So he votes for nothing.

But I want to vote for something.

Just let me ink my finger once please.

This notion that "better must come", is truly one that we are hoping on. A plea for all politicians, not just the Jamaican ones, to come into terms wanting more than just to say that they have won. But to defeat all the odds that keep them from drastically improving their country's well being. An urgent request to see pass the norms of politics and stand firm in the creation of difference that will be hard, that will involve several 'fights', that will allow you to lose allies, but that will turn the table for your country and in return, turn the table for a better world.

A world where people will stop voting just because they have the right to.

And vote because they see leaders worth voting for. ■

**"Get up, stand up!
Stand up for your rights!
Get up, stand up!
Don't give up the fight!"**

-Bob Marley



WHAT HAPPENED TO DEMOCRACY IN CAMBODIA?

Moa Persson



☞ **The election in 2013 stirred up the politics in Cambodia. The sitting party CPP, Cambodia's People Party, with its front man Hun Sen have had the power since 1985 but in 2013 things could have changed. The opposition biggest party CNRP, Cambodia National Rescue Party, with its former frontman Sam Rainsy had gained more votes than the ruling party had expected. Something that Hun Sen could not bear, and said that the opposition party had manipulated the result.**

The latest political actions have had a big impact on the democracy in Cambodia. All coming from the ruling party CPP, Cambodia Peoples Party and Hun Sen, doing everything he can in his power to remain in power. For the upcoming parliament election 29th of July this summer, things aren't looking any different for the outcome of this

election compared to the one in 2013. The political actions and laws made from the parliament the recent years have made it clear the direction Hun Sen wants to go is not the way to increase the democracy in the country. November last year, the Supreme Court dissolved the biggest opposition party by enforcing a law approved by the CPP making it available to dissolve political parties whose leader has been arrested. The CNRP party and its leader Kem Sokha were accused of aspiring to make a coup d'état with the help from the U.S, something that experts have said to be another political move by Hun Sen to remain in power and limit the threats from the opposition party. What has been said by experts is that they were counting on Hun Sen to take political actions in order to remain in power, but are yet surprised on the extent of the measures CPP has been taking that have lead to less democracy in the country.



Sam Rainsy



Hun Sen

But what is happening with the democracy in Cambodia in the aftermath of the recent political actions? Foreign aid donors are withdrawing their money from the country, being afraid to be symbolized with giving money to the regime and donors who are staying put in the country are being criticized for not taking enough actions to secure that the aid won't end up in Hun Sen's hands. Meanwhile, there is a huge crackdown on the civil society. International NGOs with a democratic focus are getting kicked out of the country, getting high taxing fees from the government and are being accused of not paying enough taxes to the Cambodian state.

regarding for example deforestation, government corruption and expropriation.

The result of the upcoming election is clear. Whether or not the CPP will receive any support at all from the people, it will not likely want to step down from the power. Hun Sen has expressed that he wants to rule at least ten more years. Whether or not that will be the case no one can tell. But if there is any glimpse of a democracy recovery in Cambodia, it will likely take many years to restore from the political actions that were made during the last years. 🇰

" Whether or not the CPP will receive any support at all from the people, it will not likely want to step down from the power."

The same argument is used to make sure the only media houses up and running during the election will be CPP-friendly. A number of independent media houses have been shut down, such as the radio stations Radio Free Asia and Voice of Democracy Phnom Penh but also Cambodia Daily, the biggest English newspaper. All of them known for not fearing to criticize the government on sensitive issues

Further readings?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/14/opinion/cambodia-kem-sokha-hun-sen.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/02/world/asia/cambodia-kem-sokha-arrest-hun-sen.html>

<https://www.ui.se/landguiden/lander-och-omraden/asien/kambodja/>

MEXICO'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The biggest and most expensive elections in modern history.

Gloria Trujillo

March 30th was the official day to start the presidential campaigns in Mexico, the biggest in the country's modern history with 89 million voters. And the most expensive as well with an investment of 6.778 million Mexican pesos (552,420 million EUR), according to The National Electoral Institution (INE).

This time are four main candidates fighting each other to become the Mexican head of state, and the first time that the centre-left Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the conservative party National Action Party (PAN) made an alliance and are supporting the same presidential candidate. Ricardo Anaya representing the conservative party (PAN) was elected to be the presidential candidate for the alliance "For Mexico in Front".

This coalition had not been well accepted for many members of both parties and some of the most important politicians resigned. The most notorious case was Margarita Zavala's (PAN), wife of former president Felipe Calderón. The former first lady was considered the Mexican Hillary Clinton and for many of PAN members was a clear option to become the presidential candidate. The PAN results from the last presidential election in 2012 and after the former president Felipe Calderón's period were a catastrophe and the party became the third political option of the country. This factor was one of the reasons to make an alliance with a left party, in order to get back the presidency. This year, after a big polarization of the PAN and an internal fight between Zavala and the pragmatic young Ricardo Anaya, has lead Margarita Zavala to resign from her party and run as an independent candidate.

According to current opinion polls **Margarita Zavala** is running in the fourth place. She has the last position in the ranking of presidential candidates with around five percent of supporters.

The candidate for the National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) **Andrés Manuel López Obrador** (AMLO) with the support of 43-48 percent according to opinion polls has the first position and is the contender to catch up to. Obrador has been Mexico city's mayor and the former

presidential candidate for PRD in 2006 and 2012. In 2006 Obrador became a very big protagonist in Mexican political context, after the controversial presidential election, in which he was considered as a virtual winner during the campaign's period. Felipe Calderón won the election then in the last hours with a very little percent of advantage over Obrador. This caused a very big unconformity among people, specially Obrador's supporters who alleged a big manipulation of the results and an electoral fraud had taken place, followed by big protests in Mexico city during several months. Since then, Mexico's political atmosphere has been very polarized between Obrador's supporters and Obrador's detractors.



Obrador is running now his third presidential election as a candidate but with a new political party MORENA. Andrés Manuel López Obrador resigned from PRD in 2012 and created MORENA in the same year. Considered for some as an anachronistic, populist and socialist leader, the MORENA candidate has been compared with Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro. During the last months a part of the Mexican media has even suggested a connection between Obrador and the Russian government. Obrador's political movement has created not only a big polarization in the country but also a social and political debate. Obrador's central ideas are most grounded on redistribution of wealth by the centralization of the state, and nationalization

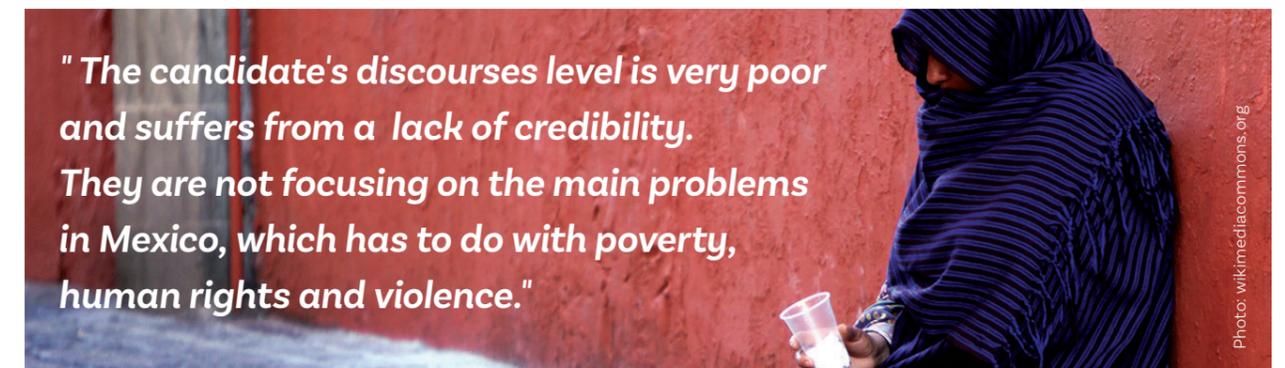
of national resources to combat the inequalities in the country seen as the biggest challenge.

In the second place in opinions polls running the youngest contender **Ricardo Anaya** with 26-28 percent of supporters. Ricardo Anaya is considered a conservative, clever and pragmatic leader who has escalated and increased his power in politics very fast. He was a part of Calderón's team but when Anaya decided to become the presidential candidate from PAN, the differences with the Calderón family were clear and ended up with Margarita Zavala's resignation from the party. He is considered a betrayer by some PAN members. He has been enough skillful to convince the central-left party (PRD) to make an alliance and be the face of that alliance. He represents a well accommodate upper class with good skills as a political speaker and negotiator. Most of Anaya's political discourse towards the election is focused on criticising and answering Obrador's solutions and ideas, especially regarding economic challenges.

in 2000. It was the first time that the opposition, represented by the conservative party PAN won a presidential election. In 2012 the PRI took back the power with a big mediatic campaign by his candidate Enrique Peña Nieto. In order to continue in power, for this presidential election the PRI has chosen a very low-profile candidate who is more known in the private sector. In the opinion of some political experts José Antonio Meade has not the presence nor the skills as his rivals. His discourse is focused on separating himself from the rest of the politicians and giving the impression of a common businessman who understands the country's challenges. But the reality is that he worked as a public servant too for the PRI and has very good contacts with the establishment.

What are the Mexican people expecting with this election in July 1st?

The candidate's discourses level is very poor and suffers from a lack of credibility. They are not focusing on the main



Ricardo Anaya is for modernization and liberalization of the Mexican economy. During his period as president of the national parliament, he supported many controversial reforms on national laws proposed by former president Felipe Calderón (PAN) and implemented by the current President Enrique Peña Nieto (PRI) in order to privatize national resources and education in the country.

The third candidate in the polls is José Antonio Meade, the "official" candidate from Institutional Revolutionary (PRI). The official party has decreased in popularity and in supporters during the current president Enrique Peña Nieto's period, a period characterised by a high level of violence and corruption.

The PRI has been the political party that has ruled the political power in Mexico since 1929. But the PRI lost the power after 73 years for the first time in a presidential election

problems in Mexico, which has to do with poverty, human rights and violence.

Some of the actual challenges in the country is the high level of violence against civil population by policeman, military and the drug cartels: The lack of focus on the violation of Human rights such as forced disappearance, femicides and the assassination of several journalist are the most urgent problems that needs to be taken into consideration. If Mexico wants to maintain the status of a young democracy it needs to have a president who takes these issues seriously with concrete vision and solutions. But the reality seems to be that some Mexican voters expect an unreal radical change with Obrador and some want just to choose a new option without concrete expectations. Others, influenced by the polarization and tendentious media, expect to stop Obrador's project of transforming Mexico into a new radical socialist country.

THERE IS NOW A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY IN ZIMBABWE

Josefin Stenmark



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After 38 years under the governance of the former president Robert Mugabe, Zimbabwe is now in a state where the population can sight at least two roads from their windows. One consists of the now ruling party ZANU, and the second of the opposition MDC. There are split opinions within the civil society whether the election which will be held this summer will be free and fair. Many believe that ZANU will win even in a fair election, by the support for the new president who overthrew Mugabe with different forms of control. Others says that the opposition MDC with their new leader Chamisa will win despite splits in the party and their subordinate role in the state's media. The big question is what is going to happen if the opposition grows strong enough to bring about a second election round, which was the case in 2008. Then 200 people were killed in violent protests due to Mugabe's refuse to admit an electoral loss.

In April I got the chance to visit the organization Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust (YETT). YETT works for a just, inclusive and prosperous society where young people fully participate and lead in sustainable development. Through campaigns they have been part in the shift of youth participation in registration for voting. In the last election in 2013, only 8 percent of the Zimbabwean youth (up to 35 years old) voted. This year, already 43

percent of the 5,6 million citizens who are registered to vote are youths.

What struck me the most during my one week visit in Zimbabwe was the endurance of the young people, fighting for a reconstruction of a country they have never got the chance to see in bloom. People with a vision of a democratic culture where there is real influence of the young Zimbabwean, of women and of people with disabilities. Groups that today are marginalized in the political system. People who see corruption as the dangerous cancer in the state which must be cured. Who are willing to participate and bring their force, creativity and energy to get the country back on its feet.

60 percent of the Zimbabwean population are youths. It is no exaggeration to say that the future belongs to the young people. Now there is a window of opportunity for a democratic shift in the history of Zimbabwe, where the youths are probably the most eager to witness a change. Even though the window is open, there are no guarantees against a quick closure or a backlash. Regardless the outcome in the election there is a new generation who deserves the world's support in fostering a democratic culture, document human rights violations and raise the voices of the youths.



Political debate among youths on the topic of 'a Democratic Zimbabwe'

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" Now there is a window of opportunity for a democratic shift in the history of Zimbabwe, where the youths are probably the most eager to witness a change. "



The head office of YETT



Youths gathered for a community meeting

HUMAN RIGHTS -SOMETHING THE EU REALLY CARES ABOUT



The Sejdic-Finci case and its role in the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Union

Adis Hasic

After years of fighting, relentless war and thousands of deaths the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina finally came to an end in the autumn of 1995. With the stroke of a pen, Alija Izetbegovic, Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman ended what's has been called Europe's worst tragedy since World War II. The peace agreement was negotiated at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio in the United States and is therefore most commonly referred to as the Dayton Agreement or the Dayton Accords. The agreement did not only stop the bloodshed in Bosnia, it also set the path for the young country's future existence by establishing the fundamental legal principles according to which it should be governed. This includes certain agreements regarding internal borders and the countries relationship with the international community, but most importantly, the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As every constitution in a democratic state, the Bosnian one outlines the voting system of the land and lays forth civil liberties and rights guaranteed by the state to its citizens.



Article I(2) of the Bosnian constitution clearly states, that the country should operate under the rule of law and with free and democratic elections. The electoral procedures

regarding the parliamentary assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina (the House of Peoples) is further specified in article IV on the same topic and states that the assembly should consist of fifteen delegates, five Bosniacs, five Croats and five Serbs. And with regards to the Bosnian Presidency, the same principle of divisions seems to apply. When comparing article I(2) and IV and its presidential counterparts, it's apparent that the Bosnian constitution is at the very least dubious and conflicting. How can a county operate under the rule of law and at the same time hold free and fair elections when the law only allows for three ethnicities to stand election to the parliamentary assembly and the Presidency? This can hardly be "free and democratic". By simply compering these provisions, it looks like Bosnian constitution sanctions discrimination against anyone who isn't a Bosniac, Croat or Serb. If you are e.g. of Romani, Jewish or Swedish descent, it seems like these laws would prohibit from becoming a delegate to the House of Peoples or one of the three presidents of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

While Bosnia's status as a signatory member to the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) further complicates the legal understanding of these provisions, it also gives its citizens more ways to seek justice. When all ordinary legal remedies in the domestic order have been exhausted, a wronged citizen of any signatory state can appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). This is exactly what Dervo Sejdic, of Roma origin, and Jakob Finci, of Jewish origin, did after they unsuccessful challenged a decision from the Central Election Commission that prohibited them from standing elections due to their respective ethnicities.

When the applications were sent to the court in 2006, Sejdic and Finci cited article 14 of the ECHR (non-discrimination) in conjunction with Article 3 of Protocol No. 1 ECHR (right of free elections) as well as Article 1 of Protocol No 12. ECHR (general prohibition of discrimination) claiming that

the Bosnian constitution prohibited them from standing elections to the House of Peoples and the to the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina due to their respective ethnicities and that they therefore have been prohibited from participating in public life in a discriminatory manner.

Thus, the court were to decide, whether the provision in the Bosnian constitution regarding elections to the House of Peoples and the Presidency are discriminatory according to cited provisions and consequently in violation of the ECHR. Unsurprisingly, the court ruled the Bosnian constitution to be discriminatory in these areas and that the relevant provisions were in violation of the ECHR. Surprisingly, the court wasn't unanimous in this decision, with Judge Bonello delivering a completely dissenting judgment.

" How can a county operate under the rule of law and at the same time hold free and fair elections when the law only allows for three ethnicities to stand election to the parliamentary assembly and the Presidency? "

In many cases, successful litigants of the ECtHR achieve no material justice as the court lacks an effective system of sanctions. It can merely award the winning parties monetary compensation in the form of damages. Any real change in the legal system due ECtHR case law hinges on the judges and politicians of each signatory state or the in-built mechanism in the domestic legal system (such as the 19 § of the 2 chapter in the Swedish constitution). Regarding this ruling, very little has happened in the nine years since the court decided in the case, and it's yet to be implemented in Bosnian law.

The ruling has, however, sparked a debate in Bosnia. It is apparent that the electoral system is flawed, while every change to it threatens the very document that allows for the nationalist establishment to stay in power. A change in one part of the constitution would open a Pandora's box of legal reform and further weaken the political establishment. Fortunately enough, there are political forces both inside and outside of Bosnia pushing the country towards

Europe and accession to the European Union. This has allowed for the leaders of the EU to put forth certain demands in relation to the accession process, and one of these demands are, that if Bosnia is to join the EU it must fulfill the its human rights criteria which translates into an implementation of the Sejdic-Finci ruling.

Initially, the EU was very adamant in their demands. The Bosnian Stabilization and Association Agreement was even blocked because of failures to comply with the ruling. Since

2014, however, the EU has taken a different approach to the problem and its goal has been to reach a pre-accession deal with Bosnia without it having to change its constitution. In return the Bosnian leaders had to write a written commitment to a package of reforms, including Sejdic-Finci compliance.

Although the EU's new standpoint allowed for the unfreezing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement and subsequently Bosnia's progress towards EU membership, this kind of solution might seem contra productive to some. Certainly, the condition of Sejdic-Finci compliance remains, but it has been sidelined.

I am not quite sure how to feel about this. But in the long term, I think the EU leaders took a good decision regarding this question. The number one priority in the Bosnian Stabilization and Association Process is for the country fulfill as many accession requirements in the shortest possible time. If this means a temporary sidelining of the Sejdic-Finci ruling, so be it. A change in the election system will eventually come, but only under one condition, and that's that the EU keeps pushing Bosnia in the right direction. The voting laws is just one of the many human rights issues Bosnia is facing, and there is plenty to be done.

To conclude, it's my view that Bosnia's development in the human right field is closely dependent on its progress towards EU membership. With it comes democracy, rule of law and civil liberties everyone should have the privilege to enjoy. Expansion of the union is something we should strive for in the European community, not only as it strengthens the EUs diplomatic and economic muscle, but also because such an expansion is an export of freedom. And now more than ever, in the light of Brexit, I believe expansion of the union is a must for its continued existence. Allowing for new countries to join, is a mutually beneficial must for all parties involved, which both the EU and the yet to be member states, simply can't do without.

LOOKING AT THE SWEDISH ELECTION

- through the lens of European Elections

Gustav Nyqvist

☞ **One way of looking at the Swedish election is to look at what has been going on in other elections around Europe. A few trends are clear.**

To begin with: declining mainstream parties. In almost all national elections around Europe, you see a decline in political mainstream parties. In some cases - like in last year's 'first round' presidential election in France - we saw Benoit Hammon from the french socialist party get 6,4 percent of the votes. His predecessor got 28 percent of the votes in 2012 and then later won the presidency in the 'second round' with 51 percent of the votes. Many described the fall as a collapse of the Socialist Party.

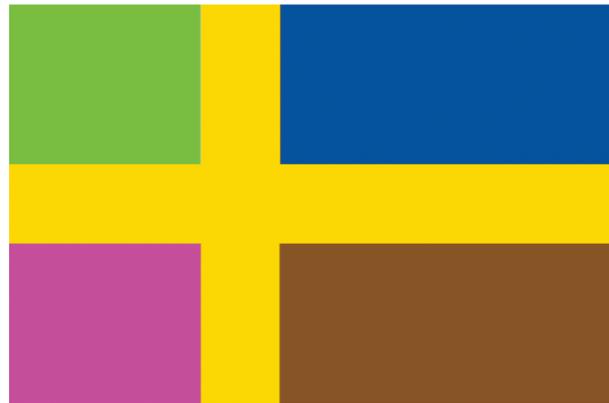
Another trend is the rise of new political parties. What happened in France was of course the entrance of En Marche.

To a varying degree, the story is the same in most national elections around Europe. Mainstream parties have lost their comfortable front row seats to new parties from across the spectrum. We will not see a dramatic decline in the Swedish parliament election this fall. The Social Democrats (S) started declining in the beginning of the 1990s, after an almost century long steady 45 percent. They are since then used to a 30 percent mandate. A decline presumably due to new parties, adding some new colors to the political spectrum.

Green: The Swedish Green Party (MP) finally made it across the 4 percent barrier into the Swedish Parliament, the Riksdag, in 1988. The environment, specifically maritime pollution, debated in 1988 held the party around 5 percent. Since the global debate on climate change, the party fluctuates around 7 percent. Yet as of late, following a couple of scandals and controversies, they are polling only just above the 4 percent barrier.

Many voters have left, feeling betrayed on immigration-policy during the migrant crisis in 2015. Since they started governing together with the Social Democrats, long time core values has come into question and steadily dropped

from their political program. It is better to govern than not to govern, has been the argument at the top of the party. But alas, you can not govern without a mandate.



Brown: The Sweden Democrats (SD), represents in Sweden the entrance of nationalism as a "born again" political movement, making its way into european national elections in the 90s. Their politics are portrayed as nationalist conservative or even extreme right. The Sweden Democrats, as many of their counterparts around Europe, talk about mainly one thing - immigration - and that there is way too much of it. The Sweden Democrats made its way into the Riksdag in 2010. Far later than their counterparts in other European countries.

If you only look at their official party program you might get the benign impression of a national conservative party on the right, hung up on national identity, and that is how they would like to be perceived. But, looking at their neo-nazi roots and what they say in printed press, on social media and among themselves, you might very well call them extreme right.

In 2009, a year before entering parliament, their party leader Jimmy Åkesson said, in an opinion piece in Aftonbladet (a major newspaper), that Islam was the biggest threat to Sweden since World War II. Björn Söder, party chair, made the distinction - as Deputy speaker at the Riksdag in 2014 - between Swedish, Sami and Jews, claiming Sami and Jews

were not part of the Swedish nation. These statements, together with their neo-nazi roots, countless racist blunders and remarks from national and local party officials, accounts for their extreme right position.

Feeling the pressure from public outcry and bad media coverage, the party instituted in 2012 a "zero tolerance of racism" and began to exclude members. Despite countless controversies, the party doubled their mandate in the 2014 election to 12,9 percent. Today the party seems to be stabilizing around 15 percent of the vote, but this is also too early to predict, especially in the case of Sweden Democrats where opinion polling compared to actual election results have been highly underestimated.

What the Sweden Democrats have done, is to change or tilt the political debate to their favour, controlling and framing the debate about immigration, crime and integration. There has been a long present vacuum widening the space for national conservatism - the shortcomings of integration, lowering taxes, the reconstitution of the Swedish welfare state under New Public Management and its commercialization of the welfare state, Folkhemmet - has paved the way for the Sweden Democrats to step in and fill the hole, blaming immigration as too expensive.



There is also the looming question: Who 'can' govern? Sweden, in the election four years ago, also represent the new normal for Europe. The are no real winners in the national elections. Last time around in Sweden, the electorate had split into the two blocks left-right as per usual. The left side had more votes than the right side. But, the outsiders, the Sweden Democrats, now had taken such a big chunk of the electorate that a coalition government on either side could not form a majority in the parliament and therefore could not govern. In order to deal with this new situation, there was an agreement between the two political blocks,

to let each others legislation pass and particularly to approve the proposed national budget. But the agreement (DÖ, decemberöverenskommelsen) died only one year in, by the hands of the Christian Democrats (KD).

" To a varying degree, the story is the same in most national elections around Europe. Mainstream parties have lost their comfortable front row seats to new parties from across the spectrum. "

This time around, with a predicted even bigger mandate, the Sweden Democrats are in an even better position to cause the same predicament for who ever "wins" the election.

There are a couple of scenarios. There might be more of the same block-politics of left and right, that has been the case in Sweden for more than 20 years. Or there could be a new coalition government, made up of parties meeting in the middle, i.e a coalition of Social Democrats, Green party, Liberal Party and Center Party. The trick (apart from getting along) is to account for more than 50 percent of the seats in the Riksdag. But that will be difficult for any formation to add up.

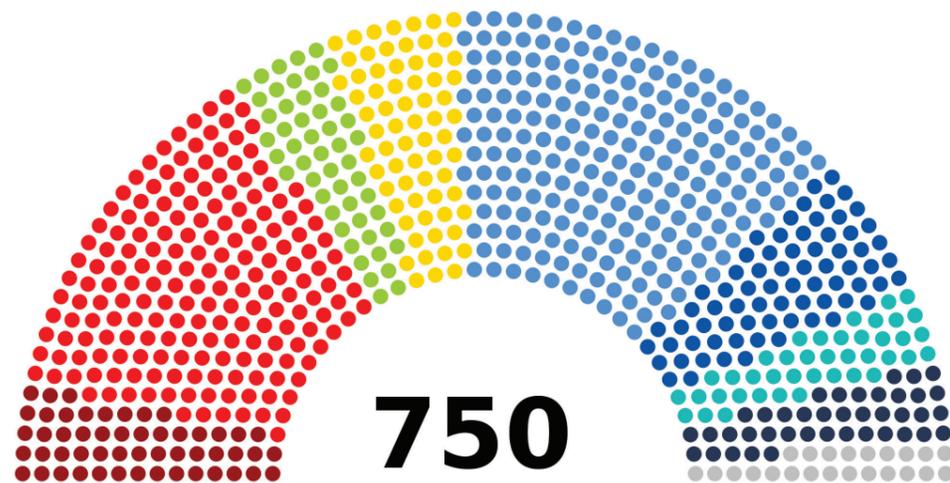
Closest to adding up to 50 percent (as of now) might have to entale a coalition of the Social Democrats and their main contestor, the conservative party Moderaterna. But the two probably can not do without one more party, either the Green Party, Center Party or Liberal Party.

More than one party in Sweden is dangerously close to the minimum 4 percent mandate to the Riksdag and risk standing on the doorstep this fall. To complicate things further, a new party is making its way forward, Feminist Initiative (FI), polling around 2 percent, in their second attempt in september. Adding **Pink** to the political palette.

So there might be 7, the current 8 or even 9 parties in the Riksdag next year. Too many parties some have argued. Depending on your preferences, the Swedish election this fall is going to tickle more than one bone. 🍌

THE ROAD TO 2019 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS

Mikael Lassa



Source: wikimediacommons.org

European Parliament Composition 2017

📌 **In May 2019 European citizens will be called to vote for the ninth EU parliament. European elections are often the representation of the complexity of continent-wide political trends and currents, making their outcomes singularly difficult to predict. And yet the question of the next EU elections is starting to be a pressing matter in Brussels, even with a year left.**

Any serious forecast would need to consider the complexity of the electoral landscape that the recent elections in France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, among others, have set up. Some of the latest national elections have indeed displayed the potential for substantial changes in the composition of the next parliament. And even though the time is premature for accurate predictions, there are several themes and events that might give a hint on the path European politics can take in the turbulent months leading to the elections.

The old and the new

The current scenery of the EU parliament is dominated by two major parliamentary groups, namely the broadly

center-right European People's Party (EPP), and the center-left Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). Out of 751 seats, EPP holds 217 and S&D 189. The 2014 elections, however, also saw the upsurge of Eurosceptic and nationalist parties, famously including the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), a trend that is far from being over today.

Four years have passed, and with traditional parties struggling in elections all over Europe (a trend particularly visible for social-democratic forces), the share of the vote for populist parties can be expected to be higher than in the last ballots. Not surprisingly so, given results such as the triumph of far-right Lega Nord and the anti-establishment Five Star Movement in Italy, and the confirmation of the Orbán regime in Hungary, as well as the electoral performances of parties such as Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the Austrian FPÖ. For instance, the European political group Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), which in fact comprises far-right parties such as Lega Nord, the French National Front, and FPÖ, can be expected to substantially grow in size from the mere 36 seats they currently hold.

The Brexit seats

With the UK officially set to leave the Union in March 2019, its 73 seats in the EU parliament will be vacated. Not all of them will be freed up: 27 seats will be reallocated among the fourteen countries deemed to be underrepresented: in particular, France, Spain, Italy and the Netherlands will gain the most seats; this will bring the total number of representatives to 705. What is to be considered here is that the departure of UKIP will leave the Italian Five Star Movement as the only major party in the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group, who will therefore need to rethink their European alliances and perhaps seek new chances.

Macron's wild card

An important spotlight will be set on the French stage, where Macron will need to consolidate its 2017 victory in order to advance his European reform project. His party La République En Marche (LREM) will be a newcomer in the EU parliament, and the question of its political allegiance is still

open. While it might be possible for it to join the liberals of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), it is more often speculated that Macron will try to create a new centrist European political grouping, although it is not yet clear which allies it would draw from other countries.

Upcoming national elections and the Greek variable

One of the most notable elections in 2018 will be the Swedish one, where current polls see the Social Democrats on top, followed by the Moderates and the Swedish Democrats. Other parliamentary elections in EU countries are scheduled for Slovenia, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Luxembourg in the coming months. What stands out is the consistently intricate case of Greece, where elections are scheduled for late 2019, as it remains a volatile setting where it is not inconceivable to expect earlier snap elections, as already happened in 2015. And with Prime Minister Tsipras's party trailing behind their center-right opposition in the polls, the pending question of Greek leadership can be crucial for the future of the country in the Union. 📌

" Some of the latest national elections have indeed displayed the potential for substantial changes in the composition of the next parliament. "



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CONTRIBUTORS



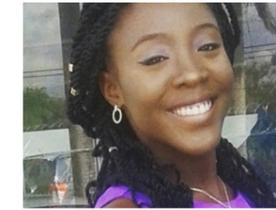
Moa Persson

Legally responsible publisher
Editor in chief
moa.persson@utblick.org



Ariadna Carrascosa

Editor in chief
ariadna.carrascosa@utblick.org



TeHillas Maloney

Writer
Tehillamaloney@hotmail.com



Parwa Sadik

Writer
gussadikpa@student.gu.se



Fria Åberg

Writer
fridaaberg@live.com



Emma Smedberg

Writer
emma_smedberg@hotmail.com



Shakira Mills

Writer
shakira.n.mills@gmail.com



Gloria Trujillo

Writer
gloria.trujillo@me.com



Josefin Stenmark

Writer
josefinstenmark@gmail.com



Adis Hasic

Writer
Gushasiad@student.gu.se



Gustav Nyqvis

Writer
Radio@ufgbg.se



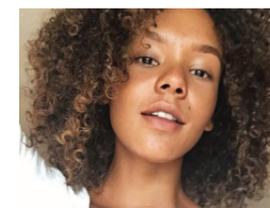
Mikael Lassa

Writer
mikael.lassa@gmail.com



Brea Pluta

Proof reader
brea.pluta@gmail.com



Saana

Illustrator
saanakjohn@gmail.com



Ahyoung Kim

Graphic designer
guskimah@student.gu.se

The Society of International Affairs Gothenburg is a non-governmental organization with the ambition to spread knowledge and spark discussion about foreign policy issues. We organize lectures and trips, host movie screenings and publish the magazine Utblick. A one-year membership is 50 sek and everyone can join.



The poster features a central circular emblem with the text "UTRIKESPOLITISKA FÖRENINGEN" and "1925" surrounded by a laurel wreath. The background is a light yellow-green with a white silhouette of a building at the bottom. Various international flags are placed around the central text, each accompanied by a small photograph of a person. The text is in a mix of red and black colors.

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