

Internet Voting for Policy Proposals: Amplifying Open Government in Chile and Colombia

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Abstract: This paper investigates the impact of internet voting for draft policy proposals in the framework of Open Government Partnership, on the whole ecosystem of open government in Chile and Colombia. The research objective is, to identify the impact of i-voting for policy proposals on voters, civil society organizations, government authorities and open government overall, taking into account public transparency, civic participation and public accountability. Methodologically, this international comparison of case studies has employed a mixed methods approach including the analysis of applied reports, legislation, social media and expert interviews. It was found that in Chile and Colombia, the i-voting for policy proposals helped bridge remote parts of the countries and thus, make democratic participation more inclusive. Ultimately, the non-binding consultative i-voting for draft open government policies in both countries empowered civil society, working in the open government domain to advocate sectoral policies to be introduced by the government.

Keywords: Electronic voting, internet voting, open government, Chile, Colombia

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1. Introduction

Internet voting (further – i-voting) is often viewed as a technocratic solution in the context of elections to public offices (thereby being i-elections). Specifically, i-voting is believed to make voting easier, more convenient and save time and resources for both voters and the government. Besides

such technical and practical considerations, there are also political and democratic reasons. In particular, some political parties may view i-voting as appealing to their voter base and thereby a possibility to increase the voting turnout of their constituents. Moreover, there is a more normative vision of i-voting as an instrument of enfranchising voting. However, beyond elections, there are other applications of i-voting, in particular, voting for policy proposals. In this respect, the Open Government Partnership initiative (further – OGP) stands out as a particular international framework that encourages countries to co-develop national action plans (further – NAPs) for new policies in a dialogue between authorities and the public (the co-creation process), especially using digital technologies. Hypothetically, as an extra e-consultation or e-decision-making instrument, i-voting has the potential to empower civil society, open up authorities and advance open government. Yet, such a potential connection between i-voting and open government is understudied. Therefore, this inquiry aims to assess the impact of i-voting for open government policy priorities – on voters, civil society organizations, authorities, and open government (viewed as collaborative policy-making between authorities and the public) overall. Within OGP, South America is represented by eight national members. In this region, of all Spanish-speaking countries-members of OGP, only two have explicitly applied i-voting for choosing policy priorities during co-creating NAPs – Chile and Colombia. Both countries have been members of OGP since 2011 and have demonstrated high levels of e-government development and introduced i-voting for co-creation during the 2016-2017 timeframe. Thereby, Chile and Colombia are suitable subjects for a comparative study of the impact of i-voting on open government. With the aim to scrutinize the impact of i-voting on open government in the two countries, this inquiry explores the research question: what is the i-voting impact on open government as a system in Chile and Colombia? The following sections introduce core concepts used in this paper, review prior research on i-voting impact, specify research methods applied, present and analyse the obtained findings in each country separately, compare them among themselves, provide conclusions and open up discussion.

2. Principal concepts

For the purposes of this study, the key concept of i-voting is defined as voting using the internet and computer technologies at least for vote casting (Khutkyy, 2020). This definition entails that i-voting casting is remote – performed via the Internet. In this context, the meaning of i-voting corresponds with online voting. I-voting is a variety of electronic voting (further – e-voting) that denotes voting using any electronic technologies. Respectively, in addition to i-voting, e-voting includes voting using electronic voting machines inside polling stations. However, in our study, we focus exclusively on i-voting, which includes voting via online forms, specialized websites, mobile applications and the like. We will view e-voting cases only in the literature review section to take into account earlier identified effects of either e-voting or i-voting on open government. To consider the digital and remote aspects of voting the use of the Internet is inspected at the voter registration and identification, vote casting, counting and publishing stages of the voting process. Such a generic definition of i-voting implies that it can be applied to digitally enabled elections, referenda or participatory budgeting. The key point is that our study focuses on i-voting for policy priorities within the OGP co-creation process, be it binding or non-binding. It should be noted that we distinguish i-voting from other forms of participatory policy-making that make use of digital platforms. In particular, we view

i-voting as different from e-campaigning, e-complaints, e-petitions, e-consultations, e-initiatives, and e-discussions (Krimmer & Kripp, 2009). The defining difference is that i-voting is primarily designed for the decision-making stage of policy-making (as binding), although in practice it can be also used for the policy formulation stage (as non-binding).

In this study, open government is viewed not as a state, but as a system of governance. Moreover, in reality, it is simultaneously a policy phenomenon and a subject of scientific study. Therefore, in this paper, the major term of open government blends academic and practitioner optics alike. From a scientific perspective, the open government “designates a system of governance where governments not only selectively inform citizens or occasionally consult them about public decisions but where they should do so and where citizens can choose what to do with government information and how to engage with public institutions” (Schnell, 2020). This viewpoint assumes that governments open up by consistently communicating with citizens and involving them in decision-making with the use of digital technologies and online tools, as well as ensuring space for independent citizens and CSO activism. This vision resonates with a practitioner's term of open government as “a culture of governance based on innovative and sustainable public policies and practices inspired by the principles of transparency, accountability and participation that fosters democracy and inclusive growth” (OECD, 2016). As a synthesis of these two definitions, open government can be understood as a more inclusive and collaborative approach to public policy-making between citizens and authorities, especially using digital technologies. This interpretation of open government will be further used as a pivotal concept in this paper. It should be noted that we envision social reality as emerging on the intersection of subjective opinions and motifs, objective actions, and their subjective interpretations. This can be called (social) constructivist perspective, especially when we consider expert opinions. In addition, statements about policy-making processes can be compared across several sources in the framework of a critical perspective. Therefore, this study aims to apply both.

The paramount elements of open government are public transparency, civic participation and public accountability. They are defined according to OGP Handbook (Open Government Partnership, 2022). Transparency relates to the proactive publishing of government-held information, open access to information and strengthening the right to information. Accountability requires the government's justification of its actions, responsibility for its failures and reaction to civic oversight. Participation assumes the government's efforts to engage citizens in policy dialogue for better governance. Besides, to reflect the government's activities aimed at educating citizens, we also consider the notion of civic education. We define civic education, according to Banda (2009), as a process of learning to think about one's life as a citizen in a community and cultivating the knowledge and skills needed to act as such. Finally, to explore open government holistically, here it is viewed as an ecosystem (Harrison et al., 2012). Accordingly, the active elements of such ecosystem, or systemic agents, are citizens (when they are engaged in the voting process they are named "voters"), civil society organizations (further – CSOs) and authorities. Since citizens, CSOs and authorities have their interests and roles in open governments, we perceive them as stakeholders. Respectively, this study explores the impact of i-voting on each of these stakeholders separately and also on open government (as these stakeholders and the interrelations between them) as a totality. The connec-

tions between i-voting during OGP co-creation, government transparency, civic participation, government accountability and civic education were not in the focus on earlier studies. Therefore, our inquiry will explore the ways i-voting may influence the above mentioned open government aspects.

Our approach partially concurs with earlier studies of open government and in some respects goes beyond it. For example, the systematic review and meta-analysis of open government studies found that "open government is generally conceptualized as a new governing structure emphasizing both transparency (vision) and public participation (voice)" (Tai, 2021). And, although the author of the cited article mentions accountability, it does so only tangentially. The author does use the term "collaboration" in the sense similar to our understanding of co-creation, but for some reason limits it to crowdsourcing (although the collaboration between the government and civil society can take other forms). On the contrary, our study, in line with the OGP terminology, views accountability (as government responsiveness to civic society requests) as a separate aspect of open government comparable to transparency and participation. In addition to that, we also take into account civic education – the process of a more long-term horizon. Co-creation of a NAP can, and is normatively supposed to, manifest all of the above (transparency, participation, accountability and civic education). The translation of transparency values into policy and practice took time, while the incorporation of the democratic value of participation into public administration is also a relatively new phenomenon (Schnell & Yo, 2019). Moreover, the cited authors found that citizen education is one of the two strong predictors of even minimum levels of government openness. This indicates that our choice of including civic education as an analytical parameter of the co-creation process was reasonable. The relevance of civic education is even more important if we consider the following observations and reflections. In Latin America, the formation of a more open and participatory government at all levels of governance depends on political will to implement an enhanced access to information, accountability, participation and collaboration (Bonivento, 2017b). The principles of open government – transparency, collaboration and participation – can only strengthen the political leadership so that it becomes a key actor in the creation of open government public policies that are sustainable due to systemic interventions (Babino, 2017). Respectively, in the Latin American context, the co-creation and implementation of biennial NAPs is a necessary, but insufficient condition for a genuine, sustainable and scalable transformation of the public sphere beyond the governments in power and beyond the electoral cycles (Ramírez-Alujas, 2019). In relation to this, civic education has the potential to go beyond immediate political constellations and elections to public offices and form the basis for a more profound and participatory open government.

3. Previously identified effects of i-voting

This paper focuses on the socio-political impact of i-voting. The most studied impact of i-voting is the one during elections to public offices and referenda. Key relevant studies are reviewed below.

Perhaps the most evident identified effect, is that due to reduced costs of its usage and technological ability to include some remote groups, such as out-of-country voters, i-voting can mobilize voters and thereby, increase voter turnout. For instance, an online survey of Swiss citizens living outside the country found that the majority of them viewed e-voting via the Internet as easy to use, useful, efficient, and trustworthy; furthermore, the ease of use correlated with voters' willingness to

utilize e-voting systems (Pleger & Mertes, 2018). Research of referenda in the Swiss city of Geneva revealed that i-voting technology reduced voter mistakes that could be avoided, due to the increased effective turnout counted as the number of valid cast votes (Germann, 2021b). Similarly, a survey of 13.1% of all United States county governments uncovered that the introduction of online registration services by the government has increased the voter turnout rate in the United States midterm election (LeRoux et al., 2020). An inquiry of municipal elections in the Ontario province of Canada discovered that i-voting could increase turnout by 3.5 percentage points (this effect was larger in cases when a mail vote was not available and this option was used on a larger scale when there was no registration requirement) and also that in 12% of competitive mayoral races internet voters as a group might have changed election outcomes (Goodman & Stokes, 2020). In addition, research on i-voting in 8 cantons in Switzerland detected that, if compared to postal-only voting, i-voting had increased the voter turnout of registered expatriates by 4.1-6.4 percentage points (Germann, 2021a). Besides, the analysis of survey data on internet elections in Estonia brought empirical evidence that i-voting has become a habit of its users (Solvak & Vassil, 2018). From these studies it is reasonable to conclude that the mobilization effect is not universal and is small-scale, however, it is meaningful in the sense of enfranchising some voter groups that otherwise were less likely to engage in voting. There is one additional i-voting effect on voters. The quantitative analysis of the Estonian i-voting survey data, for the years 2013–2019, demonstrated that the voters' use of the specific cast-as-intended verification technology is associated with their higher confidence in election integrity (Solvak, 2020). This finding points out that i-voting technologies are able to increase constituents' trust in voting.

I-voting can also be applied to prioritize policies or elect leadership in this way influencing political parties. For instance, a number of 'pirate parties' have practiced online voting for electing party leadership (thus embodying representative democracy), for voting on policies (implementing direct democracy) and for delegating votes to experts (experimenting with liquid democracy) – the outcomes varied depending on the voting design and the degree of party democraticness (Khutkyy, 2019). However, i-voting can be misused with the aim to augment existing undemocratic patterns through the formalization of restrictions for candidates or voters – this was found in election campaigns of the Five Star Movement in Italy and Podemos in Spain (Mikola, 2017). Overall, i-voting is able to magnify tendencies towards democracy or autocracy of a party under examination.

Regarding the i-voting impact on authorities, there are some studies too. For example, a systematic survey of 47 electoral management bodies (further – EMBs) in municipalities of Canada's province of Ontario discovered a strong satisfaction with online voting and strong support for it, as well as citizen-centered (in contrast to alternative administration-centered) rationales for i-voting adoption (these rationales include accessibility, improved participation and convenience) and also benefits for adoption (convenience and accessibility) (Goodman & Spicer, 2019). Yet, it should be noted that the above mentioned inquiry found a number of challenges (most of them referred to digital literacy, outreach campaign and internet access; fewer of them concerned the issues of security). Whereas in the case of the Netherlands, because of dependency on the vendor, the government lost ownership and control over the e-voting system and the election process alike (Oostveen, 2010). A resemblant pattern was illuminated in a multi-methods study of the impact of i-voting on Estonian election administration: the findings demonstrated that the studied i-voting shifted and introduced

new roles and responsibilities on the administrators of elections, including such dramatic cases of delegation when the election administration did not own, rent or understand the i-voting system (Spycher-Krivososova, 2022). Despite these individual cases, an international survey of EMBs in 72 countries found no negative impact of the introduction of e-voting technology on the independent position of EMBs (Loeber, 2020). These studies highlight the role of i-voting design, training, and implementation in forming practical experiences of EMBs with the realities of i-voting.

Furthermore, by virtue of boosting citizen involvement, i-voting is capable of nudging extra formats of online civic participation in policy-making (e-participation). By doing so, i-voting affects government as a totality. For instance, a qualitative case study of Estonia's e-participation revealed noticeable disparities between the rise and the perceived success of e-voting in comparison to other instruments of e-democracy – due to the deficit of support of e-participation by politicians and the lack of citizens' interest in utilizing the full spectrum of opportunities for direct influence on decision-making (Toots et al., 2016). However, another case study of the Wasauksing First Nation indigenous community in the Canadian province of Ontario, performed by interviews with local government officials and voter exit surveys, revealed that i-voting applied for a referendum facilitated innovation and modernization of community governance, improved community connectedness, self-determination and self-governance (Budd et al., 2019). From these instances, it is reasonable to conclude that both e-governance and e-participation are experimental phenomena that evolve gradually. The following example supports this idea. The models of i-voting applied in other Canadian municipalities and experimented with in the Australian context facilitated municipal-level policy learning (Goodman & Smith, 2017).

In sum, the literature demonstrates a number of i-voting effects on voters, organizations, public authorities and government overall. Yet, these effects are neither connected with each other in one case study nor directly related to prioritizing open government policies. Therefore, this paper explores the potential impact of i-voting, specifically for open government policies in the framework of OGP co-creation processes, using the cases of Chile and Colombia.

4. Research methods

With the aim to investigate diverse i-voting contexts, the research implemented an international comparative research design of the Chile and Colombia case studies. Intending to widen the knowledge of the impact of i-voting on open government, this inquiry pursued an exploratory strategy. Furthermore, to collect rich data and to cross-validate findings, we applied a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis from multiple yet complementary sources (please see the summary of the utilized data sources in Table 1 below).

Table 1: Data sources

Data sources	Reference formats	Chile	Colombia
Applied reports			
Independent Reporting Mechanism reports	In-text citations and bibliographic details in references	5	5
Government self-assessment reports	In-text citations and bibliographic details in references	5	3
Government-commissioned analytical reports	In-text citations and bibliographic details in references	1	1
Independent reports	In-text citations and bibliographic details in references	1	
Open government-related documentation			
Government decrees adopting national action plans	In-text citations and bibliographic details in references	1	1
Information notes	In-text citations and bibliographic details in references	5	6
Social media data			
Facebook and Twitter data sources	In-text citations and attachment data	2	2
Interview data			
Online semi-structured expert interviews	In-text paraphrasing	5	5
Total		25	23

The analysis started with a review of applied reports, assessing open government co-creation and policy implementation in the selected countries. In sum, we scrutinized ten Independent Reporting Mechanism (further – IRM) reports (five about Chile and five about Colombia) that were purposefully designed to evaluate the processes of co-creating and implementing OGP policies, eight gov-

ernment self-assessment reports (five in Chile and three in Colombia), two government-commissioned analytical reports (one in Chile and one in Colombia) and one relevant independent report (about Chile). Reports on i-voting designs, decision-making procedures and i-voting's impact on open government policies were examined.

Policy analysis was applied to open government-related documentation. For this aim, two government decrees adopting NAPs (one in Chile and one in Colombia) and 11 information notes (five from Chile and six from Colombia) were reviewed. Principal attention was devoted to government policies of public transparency, civic participation and public accountability using digital means.

Manual qualitative content analysis was used to inspect publications and discussions on social media, initiated by central government authorities responsible for implementing OGP and by national multistakeholder forums (further – MSF). Four social media data sources (tweets from two Twitter accounts in Chile in 2016 as well as posts and tweets in the framework of two social media campaigns on Facebook and Twitter in Colombia in 2017) were checked for the patterns of government transparency and the depth of stakeholder deliberation, as well as for any evidence of i-voting influence on authorities, civil society, and their joint activities.

Online semi-structured expert interviews served to acquire the opinions of stakeholders from the public and the government. To compose a balanced vision of the i-voting process and impact, we reached out to civic activists, development specialists, independent experts, and government officials supposedly well-informed about i-voting in the course of the OGP co-creation process in their countries. These potential experts were recognized via two tactics: first, due to visibility on OGP-devoted government websites (listed as current and former members of MSFs – bodies mandated to organize i-voting). Second, because of recommendations by other interviewees (the snowball technique). As a result, a total of 25 most potentially aware persons (11 from Chile and 14 from Colombia) were approached. The response rate equaled 40%. That is, 10 interviews (five with stakeholders from Chile and five from Colombia) were held from 12 July – 12 November 2022. Since there are few persons knowledgeable about very narrow issues of procedures and outcomes of i-voting for open government priorities and its impact, and considering the abundant information provided by the interviewed experts, the resulting sample is sufficient. All respondents gave informed consent for their answers to be audio-recorded, transcribed and cited in publications. The average duration of interviews was 45 minutes. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and translated from Spanish into English. Interview transcripts were analysed and coded into three themes: the role of respondents in the co-creation process, i-voting design and i-voting impact.

Given the challenge of testing causality, it was assumed, only when there was a theoretically plausible causal mechanism empirically manifest in the collected data, an independent variable preceded a dependent one and the connection was non-spurious. Otherwise, a link was labeled as an association that could reflect several possible causal directions or be influenced by a confounding factor. Overall, the findings are of exploratory qualitative character and causal links require quantitative testing on a bigger sample of countries and i-voting campaigns.

5. Obtained findings

Table 2: Background information about government, open government, and OGP in Chile and Colombia

Parameters	Chile	Colombia	Sources
Freedom status (in 2023)	"Free" (94 of 100)	"Free" (70 of 100)	(Freedom House, n.d.-a; Freedom House, n.d.-b)
Political regime (in 2022)	"Liberal democracy"	"Electoral democracy"	(Papada et al, 2023)
E-Government Development index	"Very High" (0.8511 of 1)	"High" (0.7261 of 1)	(United Nations, 2022)
E-Participation Index	"High" (0.6932 of 1)	"High" (0.7159 of 1)	(United Nations, 2022)
E-information	0.8909 of 1	0.8545 of 1	(United Nations, 2022)
E-consultation	0.5714 of 1	0.4286 of 1	(United Nations, 2022)
E-decision-making	0.2 of 1	0.5 of 1	(United Nations, 2022)
Year of joining OGP	2011	2011	(Open Government Partnership, n.d.-a; Open Government Partnership, n.d.-b)
Year of introducing i-voting for OGP co-creation	2016	2017	(Sanhueza, 2018; Bonivento, 2021)
NAP co-creation cycle with i-voting	Third	Third	(Sanhueza, 2018; Bonivento, 2021)
MSF of government and CSO representatives during co-creation	Functions	Functions	(Sanhueza, 2018; Bonivento, 2021)
Level of public influence on the development of the NAP	"Collaborate"	"Consult"	(Sanhueza, 2018; Bonivento, 2021)

To provide background information about regular government structures, open government structures and OGP processes in Chile and Colombia, we hereby summarize this in the Table 2 above.

5.1. Internet voting and open government in Chile

During a timespan of more than a decade, Chile's open government co-creation pattern has transformed significantly. Since joining OGP in 2011, Chile has designed five NAPs and has implemented four of them (Open Government Partnership, n.d.-a). During this time, Chile moved forward from hasty and government-dominated consultations in December 2011 – January 2012 (Sanhueza, 2015) to a more regular and balanced government-public dialogue in 2014 (Sanhueza, 2016) and 2016 (Sanhueza, 2018). Online consultations during co-creation were held in Chile from the very first NAP through the third NAP. But some kind of i-voting for OGP draft policy commitments was introduced in Chile only during the development of the third NAP, in May 2016 (Sanhueza, 2018). Evidently, this e-consultation format paralleled the overall advance of e-participation and citizens-authorities cooperation for open government policy drafting in the country. The further analysis aims to identify effects on open government that can be attributed specifically to i-voting.

The 2016 consultative i-voting for open government policy priorities in Chile, was performed via an online form. According to the IRM report (Sanhueza, 2018), it was a Google Form allowing an individual or an organization to vote for a policy proposal choosing from a presented list between four to nine options, within each thematic axe. In each thematic table, a person or an organization could vote for only one of the proposals (Ministerio Secretaria General de la Presidencia, 2017). As noted by a witness of the i-voting development [Álvaro V. Ramírez-Alujas, independent expert], at that time the MSF did not have a suitable online platform, so it improvised by using Google online tools and invested a lot of time into collective formulating of the form questions. From the viewpoint of some stakeholders, it was not a proper form of voting [Felipe Ajenjo, development program specialist; Claudia Montero Meza, central government official]. Nevertheless, from our perspective, technically this was voting, albeit consultative. Essentially, the i-voting via the online form was an advisory, non-binding exercise in prioritizing policy proposals. Besides, the government mentioned an extra form with open-ended questions requesting citizens to develop and submit ideas within the OGP pillars [Claudia Montero Meza, central government official]. This crowdsourcing form was a different non-voting channel of citizen input in the co-creation process and therefore, falls beyond the focus of this study. Hypothetically, the use of this extra format of online consultation might have contributed to the impact on open government performed together with i-voting. Yet, the available data demonstrate the influence of i-voting per se. Importantly, as stated by the government (Ministerio Secretaria General de la Presidencia, 2017), the thematic axes for the i-voting were agreed upon between civil society and the government. This indicates that civil society was enfranchised to co-design the agenda and co-draft open government policies. Reportedly, it is the newly established fully functional MSF that has introduced a more genuine co-creation process, linked with themes with the Sustainable Development Goals (further – SDGs) and engaged wider civil society (Álvaro V. Ramírez-Alujas, independent expert). For example, we can observe the role of MSF in disseminating OGP-related information on Twitter (described and analysed in more detail further). As stated by the government, the voting was open for 14 days – from April 21 through May 5, 2016 (Ministerio Secretaria General de la Presidencia, 2017). This period was a sufficient time for reflecting and voting in such a concise survey. As the government and its civil society partners allowed this much time for the vote, this may indicate a genuine desire to let the public think through, discuss, and vote on OGP priorities, simultaneously informing and engaging more citizens to vote.

The dissemination of the online form for consultative i-voting for open government priorities in 2016 in Chile was reportedly broad. According to an independent researcher (Sanhueza, 2018), the form was sent by email to civil society organizations, through social networks and directly to those who had participated in raising the issues for the consultation. The circulation of the form in social media was difficult to confirm. To the best of our knowledge, there was no dedicated hashtag associated, either with the 2016 OGP co-creation process or with the co-creation i-voting in Chile. Therefore, searching for the social media campaign about the 2016 i-voting in the country, we examined the official OGP Chile Twitter accounts. The official channel of OGP Chile on social media (the Twitter account @GobAbiertoCL) tweeted 37 NAP co-creation-related tweets during the analysed i-voting year. However, they were tweeted in July, October, and November 2016 – after the i-voting that took place through April-May 2016. Moreover, the analysed tweets were related either to offline co-creation discussions (in April 2016) or the consolidation of draft commitments (in October-November 2016). Furthermore, the official social media account of the Civil Society of the OGP Working Table in Chile (the Twitter account @RedChileGA) had no tweets in 2016 – during the year when the i-voting was under consideration (this Twitter account was launched only in July 2017). Probably, the outreach was performed via email and via social media outside the official Chile OGP and MSF social media accounts. Nevertheless, as concluded by the government in its self-assessment report (Gobierno de Chile, 2017) the online voting was open to all other organizations interested and specialized in the defined thematic axes. Notably, in this report, the government explicated that the online voting was conducted by CSOs of the Chilean Mesa Permanente OGP (OGP Permanent Table). This indicates that civil society was mandated to organize an inclusive i-voting. As validated in an interview, in 2016 a more rigorous co-creation process helped broaden the range of potential CSOs beyond the usual suspects [Álvaro V. Ramírez-Alujas, independent expert]. Moreover, according to the IRM researcher (Sanhueza, 2018), the email with the voting link announced that the votes will be invited to participate in thematic roundtables to discuss the received proposals. Due to the promise of involving stakeholders in deeper deliberation, such call should have increased civic engagement in the i-voting. Such a multi-format consultation approach has the potential of a more profound impact on offline and online consultations on OGP co-creation. This is inspected and discussed at the end of this section.

In practice, the participation rate in the 2016 Chilean i-voting for open government policy priorities was low. As reported in the civil society-issued report, 117 persons participated in the i-voting for the third Chilean OGP NAP (Sociedad Civil de la Mesa de Trabajo OGP en Chile, 2016). This number is slightly higher than the number of people in the civil society and academic networks most actively involved in the OGP Chile process [Claudia Montero Meza, central government official]. Reportedly, most users of the online form were civil society members [Carolina Chávez, independent expert]. Of course, civil servants and other citizens may have voted too but for a country with a population of over 18 million, the number of voters is indeed low. Low awareness about OGP and the digital divide in the country also impeded higher engagement [Claudia Montero Meza, central government official]. Potentially, both a digital divide and awareness about OGP can be increased, but over time. Taking into account that civil society and government actors, most involved in the OGP process, were the most informed and motivated to define Chilean NAP, it is reasonable to assume that the i-voting for the OGP co-creation process in Chile in 2016 was expert voting – the voting of the OGP-aware circle in the country. To a great extent, this occurred because transparency,

accountability and participation are niche themes in civil society [Felipe Ajenjo, development program specialist]. These themes can be viewed as complex and elitist; relevant to only a small part of civil society [Manuel Barros, civic activist]. Perhaps, such nationwide OGP policies affecting citizens indirectly and sometime in the future indeed naturally were of interest to a narrow circle of advocates and policymakers.

The publication of the i-voting results in a detailed report demonstrates the transparency of the voting administration; comprised of civil society representatives. In particular, the report described the voting process and provided the number and percentage of votes for each policy proposal within each thematic area (Sociedad Civil de la Mesa de Trabajo OGP en Chile, 2016). Notably, the report also provided statistics regarding the number and percentage of persons who volunteered to join forthcoming discussions within each thematic area. This indicated the connection between the i-voting and the further, more focused policy debate. Besides, as reported by the co-creation process participant [Álvaro V. Ramírez-Alujas, independent expert], the MSF was able to track the process of i-voting online in real-time mode – by viewing Google Spreadsheets; updated as soon as people voted. This indicates some transparency of the i-voting. Although, since this data was not found for an external review, such transparency can be labelled as internal, not one defined by OGP standards. In any case, publishing interim voting results could be even detrimental to the democratic process due to potentially discouraging people to vote for the commitments that have not received many votes yet. The prompt publication of detailed final results is more important for transparency and public trust. Notably, as an MSF member explained, the i-voting results were reviewed with the simple criterion of taking the most voted draft policy commitments within each thematic area for further deliberation [Manuel Barros, civic activist]. The existence of a clear criterion for selecting promising commitments reflects procedural integrity, although its explicit publication would have contributed to greater transparency.

The available evidence demonstrates some objective impact of the i-voting for open government policy proposals in Chile in 2016. A direct comparison of the i-voting results (Sociedad Civil de la Mesa de Trabajo OGP en Chile, 2016) and the official, third NAP (Ministerio Secretaria General de la Presidencia 2016), do not identify exact equivalence in the wording between the top-voted draft policies and the final commitments in the action plan. Even the government representative admitted that citizens had no idea how a draft commitment ended up being a final commitment [Claudia Montero Meza, central government official]. One reason for that is that the final decision about including a policy proposal is mostly related to the capacity of a public body to implement it [Felipe Ajenjo, development program specialist]. It should be noted that, theoretically MSF or even the public could be empowered to have a final say on OGP commitments via voting. But, of course, this would shift a lot of decision-making power from authorities to the public and would require a re-configuration of OGP co-creation format in the country. Nevertheless, the core policy themes voted on by the public (or to be more precise, probably, OGP-aware experts) remained the same in the final NAP. Still, more specific draft policies were significantly redesigned and reformulated. As reported by IRM researcher (Sanhueza, 2018), the voted policy proposals were later discussed at five thematic roundtables. The government self-assessment report confirmed these consultations, specifying that they were conducted jointly by the government and civil society representatives in June – July 2016 accommodating a total of 110 participants (Ministerio Secretaria General de la Presidencia,

2017). The government report also noted that the policy proposals were analysed, prioritised and refined at the multistakeholder sessions. At the end of the sessions, the government and the Mesa Permanente OGP (OGP Permanent Table) jointly reviewed the proposals and prioritized those that were positively evaluated at the worktables (Ministerio Secretaria General de la Presidencia 2017). The multistakeholder character of these discussions definitely contributed to the democraticness of the process. Since the i-voting occurred early in the policy-making process, it was not a decision-making but rather a highlight, of priority policy areas that facilitated subsequent multistakeholder discussion. This was reflected in the IRM report that assessed the level of public input into the development of the NAP as "collaborate", meaning that during the co-creation there was an iterative dialogue and the public helped set the agenda (Sanhueza, 2018). Furthermore, in Chile, the model of co-creating an open government plan at the national scale (OGP) in 2016 was reproduced at the local scale (OGP Local) in 2019. As described in a government report, the Chilean municipality Peñalolén launched conversations about interests and concerns that were classified into the pillars of open government, voted in a prioritization exercise, and finally, from the two concerns most voted, public policy proposals were co-constructed to jointly develop solutions to prioritized concerns (Ramírez-Alujas, 2022). This case reflects an even broader impact of i-voting that expanded from the national to the local level of policy-making.

From the subjective point of view of interviewed experts from different stakeholder groups, the i-voting for open government priorities in Chile in 2016 has produced some impact too. Generally, the i-voting performed the useful role of an easy-to-use prioritization exercise [Manuel Barros, civic activist]. Specifically, the online form facilitated developing the agenda to discuss at the next stages [Álvaro V. Ramírez-Alujas, independent expert]. Thereby, i-voting served as an agenda-setting function. Via the form, people were able to propose themes to be discussed, structured and assessed at the MSF meetings and wider workshops [Felipe Ajenjo, development program specialist]. Those face-to-face working group meetings demonstrated solid participation and voice from the civil society expressed to government representatives and other stakeholders [Manuel Barros, civic activist]. The combination of an early i-voting and a later deliberation ensured a more prolonged and profound discussion. The introduction of both online (i-voting) and offline (workshops) formats allowed the inclusion of a wider public compared to a hypothetical situation if only one method was used. Indeed, the use of i-voting allowed to bridge the three macro zones of the geographically extremely stretched country – if there were no i-voting, NAP would have been different from what it actually became [Álvaro V. Ramírez-Alujas, independent expert]. Moreover, the experience of using i-voting to prioritize commitments in the third NAP spurred other digital co-creation formats. In particular, the low participation rate in the online consultation provoked raising ideas and proposals that took the shape of a more open-ended format of requesting policy ideas or commitments during the co-creation processes of the fourth NAP [Manuel Barros, civic activist]. Also, for the fifth NAP, the idea of a "Virtual Congress" consultation platform came up, although it has not been implemented yet [Claudia Montero Meza, central government official].

5.2. Internet voting and open government in Colombia

Colombia has demonstrated a gradual change in the co-creation format. After joining OGP in 2011, Colombia has developed four NAPs and has delivered three NAPs (Open Government Partnership,

n.d.-b). Although throughout this time the Colombian government maintained the initiative in drafting open government policies, its consultation process with the public has improved. The government practice progressed from formal public validation of the NAP with several CSOs and some citizens online in 2013 (Bonivento, 2015) through broader consultations in the capital, regions and online in 2015 (Bonivento, 2017a) to a wider awareness campaign on social media, online voting and deeper substantial discussions with the civil society in 2017 (Bonivento, 2021). Even though the agenda-setting remained with the government, over the years the government augmented e-participation and allowed the civil society to play a greater role in co-drafting policies and opened the opportunity for the public to prioritize policy commitments in an i-voting. The impact of introducing i-voting as an online consultation exercise is examined in this section below.

The Colombian i-voting for open government priorities in 2017 was performed at an advanced e-participation platform. Specifically, as reported by an independent IRM researcher (Bonivento, 2021), there was a virtual vote via the national government's Urna de Cristal website. The website (Colombian Government, n.d.) is a multi-purpose online platform for informing and engaging citizens in interactive e-consultations via the webpage, social media and SMS text messages. To participate the website requires registration and login using a citizen ID or an email. While login via a government-issued ID is a reliable method of identification, logging in with a simple email is evidently a less certain identification option. The necessity to register at an online platform to discuss and vote for a national policy, requires an effort thereby selecting the most motivated participants and probably reducing the number of persons who can participate in online consultations. But a reliable identification of voters on the online platform is necessary to avoid fake accounts and ensure the "one person one vote" principle. In this case, the government mixed the two approaches (ID-based identification for reliability and e-mail-based identification for inclusiveness). As an outcome, this both created a barrier to participation (the registration process) and reduced identification standards (the possibility to register via email). During the 2017 OGP co-creation i-voting in Colombia, the proposals set for i-voting were related to OGP policy areas and SDGs, structured in thematic sectors with the possibility of providing multiple-choice answers, including an open-ended "other" option [Armando Navarro, central government official]. The addition of an open-ended question to the multiple-choice list made this online consultation "hybrid" – combining i-voting (prioritization of the available policy options) and crowdsourcing (collecting ideas for extra policy options). Such an approach demonstrates the government's willingness to understand both the spectrum of desired policies and their ranking as perceived by the public. The list of options for voting presented to each voter was randomized – to ensure that the order of options does not affect the choice and was also designed to progressively narrow down and prioritize within each thematic list [Laura Tamia Ortiz, civic activist]. This is also a good practice for avoiding an artificial overvoting of the first options. Moreover, the thematic areas put forward for the e-consultation were the ones earlier selected from the National Development Plan – to ensure the availability of funding for implementation [Laura Tamia Ortiz, civic activist]. Similarly, the link of local commitments with the local development plans was confirmed by local authorities [Fredy Martínez García, local government official; Natalia Márquez-Bustos, local government official]. This strategy of the government putting forward thematic areas realistic for funding and providing enough space for the public to suggest specific policies within them laid the ground for both top-down set-up feasibility and bottom-up devised democraticness of prospective OGP reform commitments.

The 2017 engagement campaign to deliberate and vote for priority open government policies in Colombia was large-scale. This was an official social media campaign under the hashtag #AGAmosJuntos (Bonivento, 2021). The hashtag means "We do it together". Knowing the specific campaign hashtag, we were able to perform a targeted social media analysis. We identified 26 Twitter tweets and 25 Facebook posts with this hashtag and OGP-relevant content. Of these 26 tweets, four were generic calls to vote for commitments (in July 2017) and 22 emphasized sectoral topics for the prospective NAP, like ecology, peacebuilding, public finance, etc. (in July-August 2017). All but one tweets with this hashtag were made by government ministries, agencies and municipalities (@AGA_Colombia, @ANLA_Col, @mindefensa, @MinSaludCol, @MintrabajoCol, @RTVCco, @SantaBarbaraStd, @ServiciodEmpleo, @STransparencia, @Superservicios, @Supersubsidio, @urnadecristal, and @ViceColombia). The only tweet with the #AGAmosJuntos hashtag was made by a CSO Twitter account (@AFEColombia). Similarly to Twitter, of the total of 25 Facebook posts, four were generic calls to vote for commitments (in July 2017), while 21 called for reforms in different policy areas as commitments in the prospective NAP (also in July 2017). Likewise to Twitter, all Facebook posts but two were made by Facebook accounts by official government ministries and agencies (MinTrabajoCol, SantaBarbaraStd, supersalud, SuperintendenciaSSPD, SuperSubsidio, urnadecristal). The only two non-government-issued Facebook posts were by a CSO Facebook account (AFEColombia) and an individual (aura.cifuentes.52). This data indicates that the social media campaign was not grassroots but government-led. The approach of combining the generic call to vote for priority commitments with specific sectoral highlights can be assessed as an effective combination of generic awareness-raising and more focused advocacy for narrower policy areas. It is notable that while the #AGAmosJuntos tweets received a lower response (eight replies, 31 retweets, and 30 likes in total), the #AGAmosJuntos Facebook posts gained higher attention from the public (292 reactions, 470 comments, and 81 shares in total). For example, the most popular Facebook post of the campaign had 29 reactions, 140 comments and eight reposts (Urna de Cristal, 2017). Probably, this difference is due to a higher usage of Facebook than Twitter in Colombia. Overall, the government reported about 70 publications from 18 accounts gaining 2,111,392 views on Twitter and Facebook during 13–28 July 2017 (Gobierno de Colombia, n.d.-a). Moreover, during almost the same period of 12–30 July 2017, another government report informed about the reach of 343,681 users, 6,125 visits, 838 interactions and 266 comments by citizens (Gobierno de Colombia, n.d.-d). Most probably, the difference in these statistics reflects the visibility of the information campaign on social media versus the engagement of the e-consultation platform users in the i-voting campaign. In any case, the overall awareness-raising campaign about OGP co-creation and i-voting in Colombia in 2017 was rather successful in outreach.

The 2017 i-voting for open government policies in Colombia resulted in a moderate number of popular votes. As the social media data shows, during the information campaign, Facebook posts and Twitter tweets about i-voting for OGP priorities contained links forwarding to the i-voting website. Moreover, responsible persons directed citizens who commented on Facebook and Twitter to the Urna de Cristal website, resulting in 1,516 votes over the period of 12–30 July 2017 (Bonivento, 2021). As reported by a civic activist, OGP was surprised with this relatively large number of votes [Mónica Villegas, civic activist]. Indeed, this number surpasses the number of reactions and comments to any social media post about i-voting. Regarding the participants, most of the actors involved in the co-creation were part of the open government ecosystem of Colombia at the national

level but the government also managed to engage other grassroots organizations from the regions, ensuring the diversity of views [Armando Navarro, central government official] but from a civic activist perspective, the limitation of this digital exercise is that it has reached a very particular audience, aware of the open governance agenda and residing in major cities, excluding other regions as usual [Mónica Villegas, civic activist]. Especially those parts of the population who do not have access to the Internet [Laura Tamia Ortiz, civic activist]. Despite the criticism, it should be noted that the number of voters probably exceeded the number of capital-based civil servants and civic activists directly involved in the OGP co-creation process. Even if the public that voted was comprised exclusively of government officials and CSO people, it nevertheless, most probably included regional voices thereby, contributing to a more engaging and inclusive e-participation. The government has well-documented the social media campaign and voting results in two publicly available Google Folders (Gobierno de Colombia, n.d.-b; Gobierno de Colombia, n.d.-c). This demonstrates solid government transparency on the OGP information and co-creation campaign in Colombia in 2017. Still, there is some self-criticism in the sense that OGP Columbia needs better strategies, communication, and feedback on the accountability process [Mónica Villegas, civic activist]. Definitely, there is always room for improvement, yet this OGP co-creation and i-voting campaign was rather successful in terms of participation rates and regional distribution, especially in comparison to earlier Colombian OGP co-creation cycles.

The objective impact of the i-voting for open government policy proposals in Colombia in 2017 is ambiguous. A civil society representative who witnessed the process, noted that the e-consultation helped prioritize some issues [Laura Tamia Ortiz, civic activist]. For the MSF, this helped eliminate certain contested discussions [Armando Navarro, central government official]. Clearly, this facilitated the process of choosing commitments for the NAP by the mixed civil society-government MSF – the expert multistakeholder body. The challenge is that the comparison of i-voting results (Gobierno de Colombia, n.d. b) and the third Colombia OGP NAP (Alianza Gobierno Abierto Colombia, 2018) demonstrates partial correspondence of publicly top-voted draft policies and the final policy commitments. In particular, of the 21 top-voted commitments, 17 were included in the third NAP. Besides, the NAP contained 8 commitments that were not on the vote. This can be explained by the final decision-making arrangements of the MSF. As reported by the IRM researcher, the committee agreed that the evaluation of the de la Secretaría de Transparencia (the Secretariat of Transparency) would comprise 50 percent of the final grade, while the consolidated evaluation of civil society organizations would contribute the remaining 50 percent (Bonivento, 2021). This arrangement evidently kept the ultimate decision-making power not with the public (via i-voting) but with a narrow part of civil society and the government. This is definitely less empowering compared to the ideal situation of the public having a final say, via voting. However, due to civil society having equal decision-making power with the government within the MSF, civil society did have the authority to shape Colombian NAP, albeit via a small circle of representatives. The IRM researcher also found that by an internal agreement of the monitoring committee, the commitments of subnational entities entered the plan directly and without going through the evaluation process. This can explain the emergence of some OGP commitments that were not voted on during the nationwide i-voting. Also, according to a civic activist, environmental issues were assigned high priority because of environmental challenges in the country and the strength of environment action-oriented civil society [Mónica Villegas, civic activist]. Moreover, the IRM researcher discovered that two commitments

were added by the government after the review, one of which had no objection from civil society, while the other was disputed and decided by a simple majority vote of the committee members (Bonivento, 2021). These procedures demonstrate that the actual decision-making on open government policy commitments was mixed, combining a popular vote by the public with an expert vote of the deliberative civic-public MSF with the latter having a final and decisive voice. This was concordantly assessed by the IRM researcher who marked the level of public influence on the development of the NAP as "consult", meaning that the public could provide input, but it neither received proper feedback nor was able to shape the agenda (Bonivento, 2021).

The interviewed experts reported multiple effects of the i-voting for OGP policy priorities in Colombia in 2017 that can be counted as subjectively perceived impact on open government in the country.

First, there was a profound civic education component. As narrated by a government representative, the information campaign was a purposeful digital pedagogy implemented by different government entities through social networks, so that citizens could learn what is open government, open state, transparency, accountability and other key concepts [Armando Navarro, central government official]. Indeed, as analysed above, it has reached a wide audience beyond the "usual suspects" among the capital-based authorities and civil society. The communication campaign approached (most probably, digitally savvy and active in grassroots policy-making) the public in the regions. The very informing about OGP and the possibility of e-participation in online consultations via i-voting and other formats had the potential to widen the views and expand the spectrum of known e-participation choices for the public. However, from a civil society perspective, the resulting level of knowledge of open government issues was unclear [Laura Tamia Ortiz, civic activist]. Indeed, without solid evidence, ideally sociological survey data, we cannot draw definite conclusions. Nevertheless, even if the change in the number of informed citizens is below the sample margin of a sociological survey, any increase in a more OGP-aware public is good for open government.

Second, the government demonstrated its openness to policy input from the public thereby potentially enfranchising the citizens for direct, participatory and digital democracy. As argued by a civil servant responsible for the OGP process in the country, the government was willing to consider the perception of citizens regarding open government and empower citizens in their exercise of democracy [Armando Navarro, central government official]. Moreover, he added that the online consultations have facilitated guaranteeing, or at least complying with, the basic standards of co-creation legitimacy. Specifically, civil society participants had the opportunity to provide suggestions, which were communicated to high-level decision-makers and subsequently taken into account [Armando Navarro, central government official]. However, considering the realities of OGP co-creation consultations in 2017 in Colombia, it should be noted that this input from the public was non-binding, processed by the MSD and, in the end, the final say was with the government. This means that with the introduction of i-voting for open government priorities, the government created a new digital channel for public input with the potential to empower citizens with a more profound and influential e-participation in policy-making on OGP policies. However, this potential has not been

unfolded fully. The semi-formal decision-making power rested with the MSF (including both government and civil society members), while the ultimate formal decision-making power remained with the government, which adopted the NAP.

Third, the i-voting, accompanied by open-ended input options, created the opportunity for the government to provide feedback to the public and opened a debate on the format and the quality of such feedback. A civic activist narrated that it is important to consider not only quantitative (participation rates) but also qualitative (government feedback to citizen participation) outcomes [Mónica Villegas, civic activist]. Indeed, if a new, more responsive practice of detailed and personalized feedback is introduced, this signals a shift in open government. But in the Colombian case, such feedback format was rather basic and has significant space for improvement. As civic activist admitted, after the open government topics were prioritized, it was difficult to deliver adequate feedback to everyone from the local territories who participated in the consultation process [Laura Tamia Ortiz, civic activist]. She added that only the fact of prioritization and related consultation data was provided, but not specific answers about the outcomes of particular proposals, especially the ones that were not included in the final NAP. Presumably, the data collected at the e-consultation platform was so immense, that it was easy for the participants' data to get lost [Laura Tamia Ortiz, civic activist]. This does not sound like a valid argument. If the platform is developed properly, the digitally collected data should be automatically saved in a structured format. This would have allowed a thorough analysis and detailed feedback to the online platform users who provided their input. In sum, the challenge was aptly highlighted by the IRM researcher who found that the monitoring committee or the Government has not published the justification for its decisions and has not responded to comments from the public (Bonivento, 2021). This indicates that the Colombian i-voting process demonstrated only elementary accountability.

Fourth, the i-voting and other multistakeholder deliberation formats helped advance policy-making in the area of open government. According to the civil servant, the co-creation of the third NAP was an innovative starting point, which help develop a methodology reinforced in the fourth NAP and prepared for the forthcoming fifth NAP co-creation processes [Armando Navarro, central government official]. He added that one lesson learned was to reduce the number of commitments to have fewer, more robust, actions with a greater, transformational, impact. This opinion was voiced by one informant only, but it is indirectly supported by the description and analysis of the more advanced OGP co-creation process in the next fourth and fifth NAPs. In particular, the fourth co-creation process included citizen participation through different means throughout the four co-creation stages and was assessed as dynamic, inclusive and efficient (Ara & Franco, 2021) and the fifth co-creation process was an iterative deliberation of problems and their solutions (IRM, 2023). The above mentioned observation by the government official about the influence of the 2017 OGP co-creation process in Colombia on the subsequent co-creation processes in the country, demonstrates the value of even imperfect (e)participation formats (including non-binding consultative i-voting) in policy-making for they become practical learning exercises and pave the way for more citizen-empowering and government-transforming multistakeholder practices in the future.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The research identified a number of differences in i-voting design, practice and impact on open government in Chile and Colombia. In terms of i-voting format, Chilean i-voting was a simple Google Form, while Colombian i-voting was performed via a unified e-participation portal Urna de Cristal. The latter had more functions and allowed a more detailed prioritization of open government policies. This created a higher citizen empowerment potential in Colombia. In Chile, the i-voting was announced by a few social media accounts, while in Colombia – by a dozen. Also, Colombia made a purposeful civic education effort. Subsequently, Colombia demonstrated much higher social media visibility and engagement, measured by audience reach, website visits, interactions, and comments. Although in Chile, the social media campaign and i-voting were led by the civil society, while in Colombia – by the government, the overall wider campaigning opened up wider public transparency and civic engagement possibilities for Colombia. And indeed, the online visibility was channeled towards i-voting by direct invitations to vote at Urna de Cristal. As a result, the i-voting participation rate in Colombia was over ten times higher than in Chile. This clearly demonstrates that a deliberate effort to inform and involve citizens in policy-making can succeed. Moreover, in Colombia, draft open government policies were aligned with national and local development plans. This clearly positioned OGP NAP within the existing government agenda. Such a practical approach ensured the feasibility of open government policies in the country. In Colombia, i-voting results were filtered by subsequent voting by civil society and government representatives with the latter having somewhat stronger decision-making power. While in Chile, i-voting was introduced at the early stage of the whole co-creation process, allowing a wider deliberation of the highlighted issues. Therefore, although Colombia's government has demonstrated a bigger civic education and gained a wider engagement of the public, Chile's government has reached a more profound post-i-voting deliberation with a narrower part of the civil society. Thus, Colombia's i-voting was more inclusive, but the government has demonstrated rather an openness to inputs than a profound discussion with the public. Substantial and impactful discussions were held between the government and civil society representatives within Colombia's multistakeholder forum. While Chile's i-voting was rather expert, the latter was linked to formal consultations allowing the civil society to collaborate with the government more intensely and thereby, empowered to shape the open government agenda and policy deeper.

The inquiry also found several, seemingly similar, phenomena with regard to the i-voting impact on open government that actually had dissimilar patterns. Thus, in both countries, awareness about the OGP agenda was low. Therefore, the public involved in i-voting almost solely consisted of the civil society, knowledgeable about and working on open government-related areas. This eroded the distinction between general i-voters for open government priorities and civil society advocating and implementing them. Yet, there was one slight difference. In the Chilean case, the voters for OGP priorities were most probably civic activists involved in the national OGP process. In the Colombian case, it was highly likely that the voters came from civil society too, yet from not only the capital but also from other cities, thereby also representing local OGP. This indicated a more regionally inclusive i-voting and online consultation process in Colombia. Furthermore, both countries documented the co-creation process. But Chile demonstrated more profound transparency of the i-voting process,

while Colombia showed greater transparency of the awareness-raising and civic education campaigns. Although the transparency of both processes is important, the transparency of i-voting as an exercise with a higher potential of affecting policy is more critical. Also, in Colombia, digital co-creation tools were introduced for the municipal co-creation objectives in the capital and the national OGP co-creation process in parallel. While in Chile, the co-creation at the national level of governance, including i-voting, inspired co-creation at the local level. These are two different approaches stemming from the countries' open government context of theoretically equal value.

Finally, there are multiple resemblances in how i-voting influenced open government in Chile and Colombia. In both countries, i-voting themes were structured around open government pillars and also SDGs. This helped narrow down the policy-making focus (towards the OGP agenda) and simultaneously consider a wider range of sectoral development policies (put forward by SDGs). This is a good government practice of synergy between OGP and SDG worth wider international dissemination. Furthermore, the introduction of i-voting for open government policies emerged in parallel to the general headway in co-creation formats. This indicates that i-voting was among other formats of nudging the government to become more open to joint policy-making with the public. Also, i-voting in both Chile and Colombia allowed to overcome the geographical stretch of the countries and thereby, increase the democratic participation inclusion, albeit only partially. The digital divide was still substantial. Besides, in both countries, accountability in the form of personalized feedback concerning individual inputs was insufficient. In general, government accountability is the most challenging pillar of open government. Furthermore, the analysed i-voting for open government policies in both countries was non-binding. On one side, this gave the public less power. But on the other, it opened the way to more profound deliberation on the issues preliminary prioritized. Notably, both Chile and Colombia turned to more open-ended e-consultations for OGP co-creation in the forthcoming years. We can conclude that, the observed advisory i-voting for OGP priorities in Chile and Colombia had multiple effects on open government in both countries and, as an experimental experience, supported more empowering and impactful democratic formats of policy co-creation in both countries.

This research is bound by several limitations. Due to the unavailability of contact details of voters and the requirement to keep such data confidential, we were unable to interview or survey voters themselves. Thereby, their subjective perspectives on their voter experience and its impact on them are unknown. We use only indirect data of expert opinions about the impact of i-voting on voters, considered collectively. The sample of experts for interviews was comprised of highly knowledgeable persons involved in the OGP process. To obtain a more distant perspective, it might be interesting to interview less OGP-engaged informants too. Moreover, there might have been some i-voting-related materials available in paper format only, which we were not able to access remotely. Besides, there might have been some relevant materials published online that we were not aware of. But we analysed all the identified i-voting-related materials in both countries, found online and recommended by the informants. Also, this study focused exclusively on i-voting for OGP co-creation processes during the identified years at the national level. There might have been other experiments with i-voting the analysed countries, but they were outside the scope of this inquiry.

Based on this, it is reasonable to suggest a number of recommendations for further research. If available and accessible, i-voting log files can be analysed for the regional distribution of voters, the proportions of identification methods used and voting dynamics over time. Such data would be able to support or refute the hypothesis of i-voting as a "virtual bridge" between the regions, shed light on the most used actual identification methods and even infer a normal or abnormal voting pattern associated with a natural or manipulated voting. In addition, pre-voting and post-voting surveys of voters for OGP priorities in Chile and Colombia would be an informative source of information about their socio-demographic profiles and the impact of i-voting on their attitudes and practices. Regarding interview respondents, interviews with fewer OGP-engaged persons might present an alternative perspective on the role of OGP and its co-creation process in the overall policy-making process in the two countries. Successive studies can benefit from a wider policy analysis of open government reforms, not only the ones performed within the OGP framework but also affected by OGP practices and those that arose independently from the OGP initiative. Overall, there are multiple strands of future research, and we hope that our exploratory inquiry has provided some grounds for future studies on OGP co-creation using digital means.

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