

Fake News, Technology, and Human Rights in Chile

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Santiago is the capital of Chile and the largest city with over 5 million residents. It's a beautiful city on the edge of the Andes with tons of museums, art, and parks.

After coming out of a US-backed dictatorship that lasted from 1973 until 1990 in which thousands of citizens were subject to kidnap and torture, Chile is considered to be one of the most stable democracies and highest income in Latin America, though it also has high income inequality. It is currently experiencing a wave of immigration, mostly from Venezuela and Haiti.

Fundación Ciudadanía Inteligente/Smart Citizenship Foundation

FCI is an organization with offices in Chile and Brazil and reach across Latin America that fights for social justice, inclusion, and transformation of democracies through the development of digital tools to promote citizen participation, training activists across Latin America, and creation of communications campaigns to advocate for social policy.

Disinformation in Latin America

I completed a research project on the phenomenon of disinformation and fake news in Latin America leading up to my trip to Chile to guide the organization's future approach to the issue.

Key Takeaways from Research

- Fake news are prevalent across Latin America, particularly in Brazil, and are spread through social media platforms, especially WhatsApp.
- The term “disinformation” is the most accurate way to describe fake news, because it includes all types of harmful, misleading information.
- Disinformation is being used by a variety of actors, most often politicians and has the end of influencing elections and support for policies, often times with an anti-immigrant, racist agenda.
- Most promising solutions to the phenomenon are changing social media platforms' algorithms,



Key Activities

- Attended meetings related to FCI projects and discussed issues of technology and politics with FCI employees.
- Learned from two Nicaraguan activists developing an anonymous online tool to report incidences of corruption in Nicaragua in collaboration with FCI
- Attended a presentation about threats of artificial intelligence to human rights.
- Attended a lecture in the School of Social Work at the Catholic University of Chile.
- Learned about the Pinochet dictatorship and human rights abuses and hopeful resistance at the Museum of Memory.
- Learned about people's perceptions of fake news through conversations with people from Chile, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Germany at my hostel.

Reflections

It was an awesome opportunity to learn about how technology and news have an impact on issues in human rights and social work. I especially appreciated the opportunity to meet with Fatima and Pedro, the Nicaraguan activists, and hear about how technology posed opportunities and threats to their activism. Sharing strategies, insight, and networks between activists in different contexts is work that I'd like to continue to support and learn about moving forward in my career.



Advice

- Be genuine and considerate in relationships.
- Be open, curious and flexible in your expectations - sometimes the most interesting experiences are unplanned.
- Read up on U.S. historic involvement in the country that you travel to to understand your role in the context you're going into.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank the Office of Global Activities for their financial support and Fundación Ciudadanía Inteligente for the opportunity to learn from them well as Professor Justin Hodge for his support in the project and Juri Sanchez for exploring Santiago with me!