

“Deliberación País”

THE DOORS OF CHILE’S NATIONAL CONGRESS WILL BE OPENED TO THE PEOPLE IN AN UNPRECEDENTED EXPERIENCE OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY

- **An experience of deliberative democracy, promoted by Tribu Foundation and the Chilean Senate will take place in the upcoming months when around 400 Chileans —randomly selected, and representing the entire country— discuss their opinions on some of the main themes prioritized in the national consultation promoted by the Chilean Association of Municipalities in December 2019.**

Santiago, January 2020. – *Deliberación País*, a project of the **Tribu Foundation** (tribu.ngo) and the **Chilean Senate**, will open, for the first time in history, the doors of the Chilean Congress for the citizens of the country to deliberate on the most urgent social matters. This is happening in the current context of social crisis, in which the biggest protests since the end of Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship have taken place, and in which the approval ratings of President Sebastián Piñera and of the National Congress have sunk to six and three percent respectively.

This work is a scientific exercise of citizen participation, which attempts to provide a more accurate representation of public opinion, based on balanced information, reflection and empathy, rather than surface impressions and prejudices. It is based on the methodology created by James Fishkin, Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, which has already been used more than 100 times in 30 countries around the world to contribute to social understanding and the progress of complex political reforms in economic and social matters, and even for constitutional changes.

In the case of the Chilean experience, *Deliberación País* will bring together around 400 people —randomly selected with the support of the University of Chile, to ensure that each person has an equal chance of being selected— who, before the meeting is held, will receive briefing materials on the policy options to be discussed, which will have been reviewed by a cross-party advisory committee to ensure the information is balanced and accurate.

Then, participants will gather for a weekend at a single place —the National Congress of Chile— to discuss the targeted issues. During the deliberation event, participants will meet and talk with fellow citizens, and will engage in dialogue with competing experts and policymakers based on questions developed in their small groups with trained moderators. These trained moderators will ensure that all participants engage in deliberations equally and respect each other. Participants will not be asked to reach any consensus or decisions; rather, it is an opportunity for participants to understand the issues at hand and to weigh the competing arguments on all sides. Parts of the weekend event will be broadcasted on television.

After deliberations, the sample of participants will be given a questionnaire on the policy options, which then will be compared with a baseline survey that will have been taken before the event. The resulting changes in opinion will show what the people would think if they had the opportunity to become more informed and engaged by the issues, and to interact with others who live different realities. This is in sharp contrast to traditional public opinion polling: It is a case of substance, context, and sober second thought, versus sound bites and headlines.

The results will be taken by the members of the Senate’s Committee on Challenges of the Future, Science, Technology and Innovation, as a key input to draft bills on the issues, which will correspond to some of the main social priorities according to the national consultation promoted by the Chilean Association of Municipalities in December last year, in which 2.5 million people voted.

“Deliberación País opens a space for social understanding. Here, diverse ideas, opinions and experiences will be shared and heard” says Tomás González Olavarría, CEO of the Tribu Foundation. “With this initiative, where an informed and bias-free debate will take place, where empathy and dialogue will open the way to a new understanding in order to experience a quality political dialogue by average citizens, we will enrich the public debate and show that our possibilities of understanding each other are stronger than what separates us.”

Considering the scientific nature of this methodology, James S. Fishkin, was invited to this year edition of the Futures Congress in Santiago, Chile, at which this project was also announced.

“This was one of the most anticipated moments of the Futures Congress, the lecture of Professor James Fishkin, director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, who has created this scientific method that randomly selects a representative sample of the population to discuss relevant national issues,” said Jaime Quintana, President of the Senate. “That is why today we wanted to announce that the Senate and the Tribu Foundation will carry out this exercise in the upcoming months; for citizens to discuss in the National Congress on the issues that the people of Chile have defined as the most important according to the municipal consultation from last december”.

America in One Room, the US experience

The last implementation of the methodology of the Center for Deliberative Democracy was carried out in September last year. In the context of the strong social polarization experienced by the United States, and close to the primaries for their next presidential election, a group of 523 citizens representing the whole country met to address the main topics for the 2020 elections: immigration, health, economy, environment and foreign policy.

The participants received an informative document of 55 pages, prepared by technical experts representing different political and policy viewpoints, which presented the arguments for and against each proposal. Participants had been surveyed about the policy proposals in advance, and they returned to conduct the same opinion survey after completing four days of deliberation.

The deliberation process produced a substantive effect in reducing polarization. Notably, Republicans opened to immigration policy proposals, and Democrats moderated their positions regarding the need for high-cost social policies for the government.

About the Tribu Foundation

Tribu is a nonprofit and non-partisan organization, developing innovations for the future of democracy. Through research, action and dialogue, this NGO contributes to the fields of open government, crowdlaw, evidence-based policymaking, civic technologies, and sortition.

Tribu’s origin is rooted in the idea that democracy is more than a form of government, but instead a way of living together, and therefore it aims to promote the transition towards new institutional frameworks that stimulate us to interact with each other on a daily basis according to the values that are at the foundations of democracy and with the awareness of being part of the whole existence.

In January 2018, Tribu was launched at the seminar “Democracy 2050”, in which James Fishkin participated as a guest speaker alongside other international experts on political science, communications and technology. Since then, for the last two years, they have been working with the Center for Deliberative Democracy to achieve the implementation of a Deliberative Poll® in Chile.



Picture of the announcement of “*Deliberación País*”. From left to right: Tomás González, CEO of the Tribu Foundation; Senator Francisco Chahuán; Amélie Kim Cheang, Executive Secretary of the Futures Council at the Chilean Senate; Senator Guido Girardi; Professor James Fishkin, Stanford University; Senator Jaime Quintana, President of the Chilean Senate; Alejandra Larraín, President of the Tribu Foundation.



Picture of the announcement of “*Deliberación País*”. From left to right: Professor James Fishkin, Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University; Alejandra Larraín, President of the Tribu Foundation; Tomás González, CEO of the Tribu Foundation.



Professor James Fishkin, Director of the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University, on the stage of the Futures Congress after the announcement of *"Deliberación País"*.

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