

Social Media and Democracy in Latin America

Samuel Cedo

Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies, Wayne State University



WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
Center for Latina/o and Latin American Studies

Introduction

Latin America is home to countries with some of the fastest growing populations using social media. Brazil has the second most Facebook users of any country, and Mexico is the most rapidly joining Facebook in the world.

With stats like that it is no question that social media clearly plays some sort of role in the every day lives of most Latinx people and like the U.S. it has seeped its way into politics and activism.



Research Goal

The goal of my research was to find out how social media has impacted Latin America specifically regarding their politics and activism

Methods

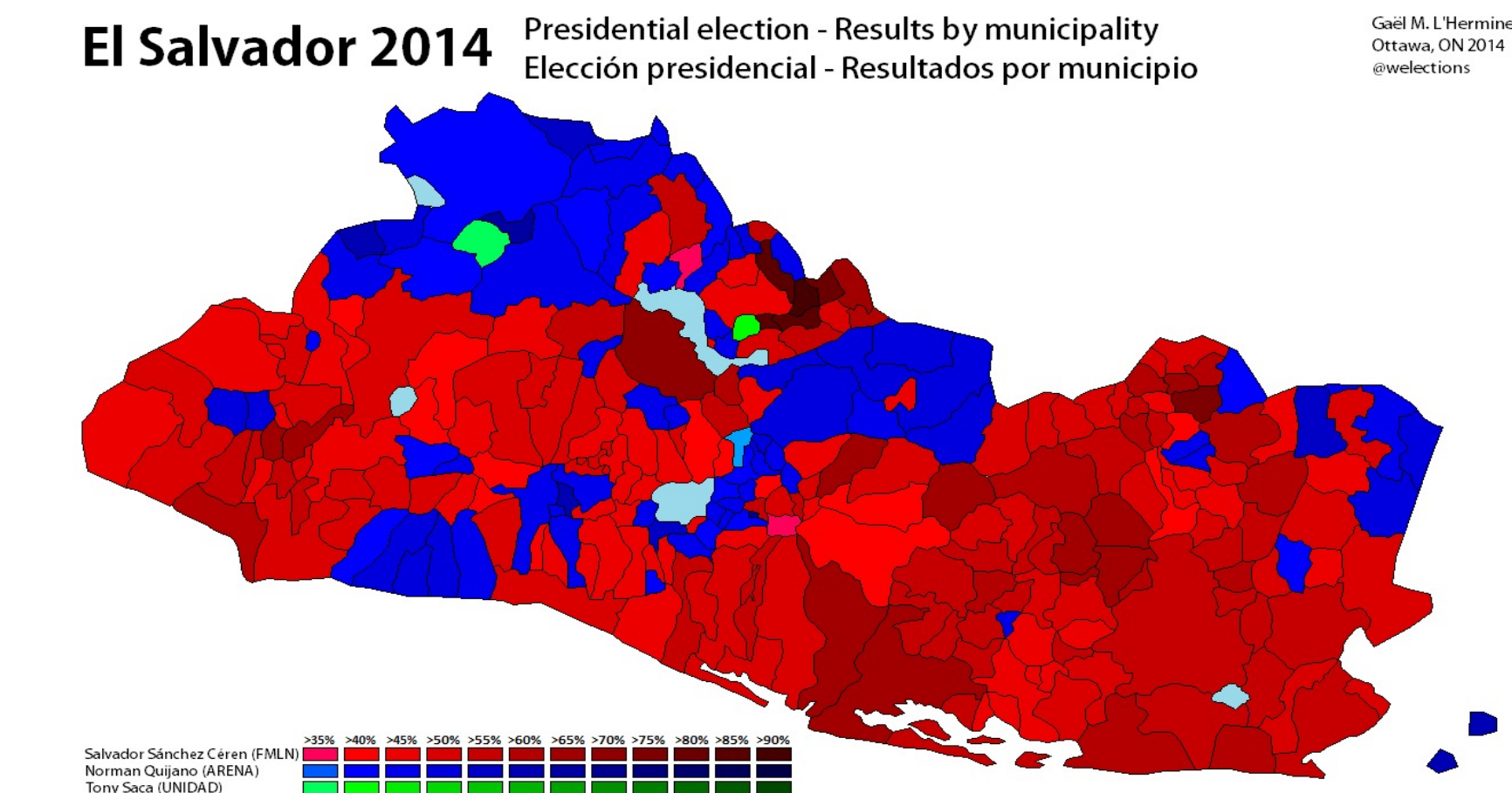
I used the Wayne State Library to look for articles and scholarly journals recently published in Academia on social media and Latin America, because recently there have been so many current events involving these two topics, I knew that the sources would be very abundant. I came across lots of articles and there were a lot of main points that stood out to me which I highlight below, mainly focusing on the areas of social media and politics and along with that, social media and activism.

Politics

In Brazil, when Bolsonaro was elected as president, it became a catalyst for dystopic discourse and a radicalization in Brazil which also was attributed to YouTube and their "auto play" and suggested videos causing people to go down rabbit holes of radical beliefs



Along with Brazil across Latin America social media is being used for propaganda, like in El Salvador with their 2014 election, Twitter and Facebook were used as ways to criticize their Right-Wing party after wanting to cause a coup when losing the election



Activism



Political participation, both passive and violent, has been a key part to politics in Latin America being traced back to the colonial era. There have been lots of examples in recent years of protests, like in Chile and Mexico where college students took to the streets to demand education reform. Along with that, Brazil saw protests proceeding the FIFA World Cup due to government spending mismanagement. Though protest is a part of Latin American politics, it is believed that social media does not influence protest/activism protest like anticipated. Education level, wealth, and ideology are more what have these influences in people's participation.

Conclusion

Though there is panic around the role's social media plays in politics and elections, this is not a new way to react, it is described as the "Sisyphean Cycle of Tech Panic" where whenever new technology emerges there is a panic from the masses which then in turn leads people to research and discover the truth behind it. In recent years, more studies point to the correlation to social media and politics being mainly influenced due to a person's environment and perspective rather than social media.

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