
Cuba: government in line with its people

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Governing is becoming a more agile and participatory exercise in the Largest Antillean island, also based on the possibilities offered by social networks. We are Cuba on the Network of Networks.

Barely a year ago and perhaps less, it would have been unthinkable to know about an event such as the recent fire at La Cabaña Fortress a while after it was made public, with a tweet posted by the Minister of Culture on the subject.

But this has been the case and it will become more and more agile, informative and guiding because the exercise of governing in Cuba is achieving contemporaneity twists also from the use of social networks.

Before October 10, some executives and especially institutions had accessed Web 2.0. But after the President of the Councils of State and Ministers, Miguel Diaz-Canel, joined Twitter that day and undoubtedly that marks a before and after.

So much so that today, according to data published by Cubadebate, a total of 7 members of the State Council, 15 of the Council of Ministers and 22 ministries and institutions, in addition to Diaz-Canel himself, have twitter accounts right now.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) was the first Cuban institution to join social networks

Since December of last year, CubaSí had called the attention with the text "The Island between networks" on the incorporation into social networks, even slowly then, of institutions and executives. When the comment was published, Facebook was the social network privileged by those who rule. Now, for obvious reasons of leadership in Cuba, twitter gains the upper hand.

But maybe the best is yet to come, maybe it's about to appear soon.

With the startup of 3G service, that is, the Internet connection through mobile data via cell phones, the possibilities for a two-way communication between Cubans and their government are further expanded.

If before December 6 there were nearly four million Cubans active on social networks, this figure will gradually grow and with it, the voice of the inhabitants of this Island in dialogue with those who rule them.

It is known that the process has been slow conditioned by the economic limitations of the country. The first to appear was the so-called institutional connectivity, through which 60% of the more than 5 million Cubans who currently access some of the services are connected to the Internet.

Then, more than two years ago, the Wi-Fi zones enabled more than two million people to have access to some of the alternatives of the Network of Networks. If we add to this the more than 1,200 surfing rooms and the Nauta-Hogar services, the increase of the Cuban presence on the Internet becomes visible.

As is logical, these connections are still mainly aimed at communicating with family and friends living in other latitudes. But as the connections continue to expand and tariffs go down - if they fall drastically today there is no infrastructure in Cuba to respond to such a demand - surfers will also look for other objectives.

And that's when it will become even richer, with a double-way road, the presence of Cuban executives on the Internet. Although they already receive criteria, they will increasingly be an exercise in citizen democracy with potentialities still unexplored on the island.

The startup of the 3G service fosters communication between government and people.

The conviction of its importance exists. The president himself has been an example and an incentive. And the citizenship, for its part, although up to now it had not had massive possibilities of connection, does have, in general, and for a long time, a technological literacy that paradoxically places it among the populations best prepared for the new technologies.

Anyway, it cannot be forgotten that the Cuban population is one of the oldest in the world and despite the abovementioned technological literacy, there are still and will be some who do not get along with touch screens or mice. That is why, as Diaz-Canel has also demonstrated, the face-to-face exchange with the people, far from formality and well-informed visits, will remain.

The conviction that all roads are valuable to enrich communication and to respond to concerns has also been conveyed in recent broadcasts of the Mesa Redonda TV program, where ministers and other top executives have appeared on three occasions to answer questions and concerns emerged in the population.

It is true that ministers and other personalities have taken part in this program on many other occasions, but in the aforementioned cases it was specifically to clarify and respond to citizens' concerns, a part of which, precisely, the social networks expressed themselves on self-employment, transportation and regulations for artistic work.

As long as the two-way digital road increases its traffic, opinion messages will surely make more room and mark stances, like the one posted by the president on December 7 with respect to the round table debate on self-employment –in addition to the informative or descriptive messages that update the citizens on the agenda of this or that executive:

"There is no need to believe that rectifications are setbacks nor to confuse them with weaknesses when one is listening to the people. Revolution is changing everything that needs to be changed. None of us can do as much as we all of can together."

The presence of Cuban leaders and citizens on social networks is also ratifying it.

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