

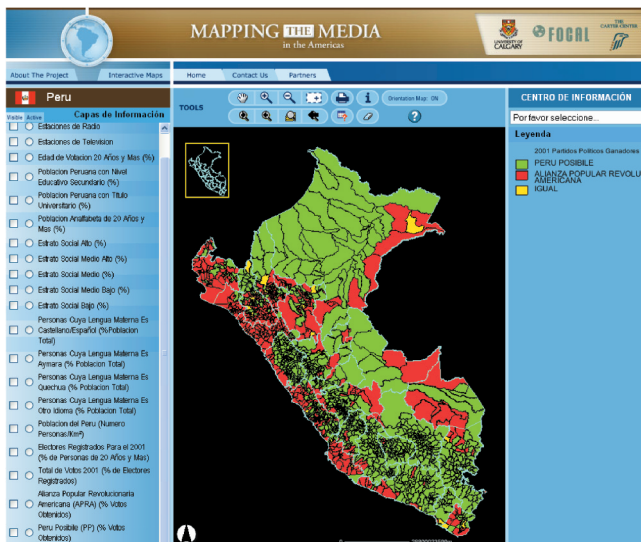
POLITICAL FINANCE IN THE AMERICAS

MAPPING THE MEDIA

THE PROBLEM

Political finance is a second-generation problem of democratic consolidation that has received increased attention in recent years. While this issue poses difficulty even to developed democracies such as the United States and Canada, it is particularly acute in countries where

profiteering on elections, charging high prices for advertising slots and delivering advantage to wealthy candidates. The resulting perception is that the media are acting as "kingmakers," determining which candidates will be successful by promoting their campaigns through discounts on advertisements and preferential news coverage. Such speculation is fed by the absence of accurate information about the media in most countries. It is essential to generate fact-based public discussion about the role of the media in elections and politics writ large.



underdevelopment places limits on the government's ability to finance politics from the national budget, which leaves private finance as the main source of political funds.

Democracy costs money. The central dilemma in the political finance issue is how to assure that sufficient money is dedicated to fostering competitive elections and well-developed political parties while preventing undue influence on—or outright capture of—the political system by wealthy private interests. Compounding this already complex problem is the fact that in most countries political parties' and candidates' access to the powerful and influential mass media during campaigns is uneven and can bias results.

There is a growing concern that mass media outlets, the majority of which are weakly regulated, for-profit businesses, are

partnered for this three-year project in 12 countries in the Western Hemisphere to (1) electronically map media locations across electoral districts, providing relevant socio-economic and demographic data about those districts and also information on the broadcast potential and ownership of each media outlet, and (2) use the maps as tools to empower policy-makers and the public to facilitate constructive reforms of political finance laws and practices regarding media access.

The maps, which will be easily accessible on the Internet (www.mediamap.info), also will illustrate connections between media ownership and the networks to which they belong, making evident at a glance if some portions of the country are served by only one media owner or news network or are served by multiple media

Dates: August 2004–July 2007

Countries: 12 countries in the Western Hemisphere

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THE PROJECT

In an effort to reduce corruption and promote equitable access to political information during elections, the University of Calgary, the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), and The Carter Center have



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outlets with the same political affiliation. Because each map will be interactive, users will be able to click on a specific country or area and bring up additional information on registration and voting patterns, population and language use, socio-economic strata and education levels, as well as information on political finance. Further information may be obtained via hyperlinks on related issues, such as regulations governing use of the media during campaigns, civil society groups' estimates of the value of political advertising, and contact information for community groups within the country working to reform campaign finance.

The collection of data and programming of the Media Maps are just the starting point of this project. The partners will meet with the media owners, editors, and journalists to preview the maps, confirm their accuracy, explain their implications for fair campaigns and party development, and urge them to practice voluntary corporate social responsibility. The partners also will explore with these influential actors which government reforms they may be willing to support and which elements of self-regulation they might adopt to enhance equitable access to the media during campaigns.

With this new resource in hand, the partners will begin meeting with government officials, electoral and judicial authorities, and legislative leaders to discuss how media access is often the most important component of campaign and party finance and, specifically, to convey potential media-supported reforms and urge implementation and enforcement of laws and policies that allow for equitable access to the media. Additionally, a one-day public education seminar on the media and elections will be held to promote usage of the country's map in increasing public understanding and generating public interest in reform.

When completed, the Media Maps will become powerful tools in the hands of citizens making an organized effort to reduce corruption and other second-generation problems facing the democratic process in Latin America.

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## THE IMPACT

Democracy depends on a knowledgeable citizenry whose access to a broad range of information enables them to participate fully in public life. One key to creating an informed electorate is to allow equitable access to the media by all candidates and political parties during a campaign, not just among the ones who can afford it.

Researchers from FOCAL (Canadian Foundation for the Americas), The Carter Center, and the University of Calgary are creating a Web-based tool that graphically illustrates where the media are located and which electoral districts they reach, and helps untangle the complex web of media ownership in the Americas. This project will raise public awareness, for the first time, of the lines of influence that the media have in shaping the campaign finance environment. This resource is freely available on the Web to citizens, media owners, policy-makers, and others. It provides a starting point for scholarly examination of the impact of media messages on voting patterns. Electoral authorities may use the maps to identify which media reach historically excluded or marginalized populations to aid them in broadcasting civic education messages to those areas and in the appropriate languages. It will help parties plan their campaigns at a lower cost. And it will encourage social responsibility among the media while also empowering government officials to implement and enforce policies that require fair media access during and between election campaigns.

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## THE PARTNERS

A collaborative approach to Mapping the Media is important because each partner brings specific expertise and experience to the project that is critical to its overall success.

### FOCAL

The Canadian Foundation for the Americas is an independent, non-governmental organization dedicated to deepening and strengthening Canada's relations in Latin America through policy

discussion and analysis. FOCAL has an extensive network of contacts in the region and serves as the lead agency coordinating the development of the Media Maps. FOCAL, in conjunction with regional civil society organizations, also is responsible for organizing local and regional public education seminars that use the maps to foster public discussion about the role of media in elections.

### THE CARTER CENTER

The Carter Center, founded by Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter in 1982, is a not-for-profit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization dedicated to preventing and resolving conflicts, promoting sustainable development and human rights, enhancing freedom and democracy, and improving health. The Carter Center is a convening authority on the issue of financing democracy in the Americas. Through its access to the highest-level government officials and contacts with media owners in the region, the Center has the ability to convey project findings as well as the visibility necessary to promote the use of this innovative tool for policy reform.

### UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Led by the Latin American Research Centre and the Department of Geography, the University of Calgary is responsible for all technological components of the project, from design and digitalization of the map to training on how to update and maintain it. Using flexible, state-of-the-art Web-based Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software programs to analyze spatially the pivotal role of the media in political finance, various datasets (including media, election, demographic and census) from each country will be organized geographically in an interactive map, and geo-statistical analyses will be performed to understand better the associations and patterns within these disparate datasets. In addition, the University has dedicated its top faculty in the area of media and political finance to consult on this project.

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