

Latham Talk Outline – Voter Media Perspectives

Notes for a future talk and possible paper; draft 2010-07-05

In addition to these notes, this talk will also reference the paper “Global Voter Media Platform”, available at votermedia.org/publications.

A. Voter Media at UBC 2007 - 2010

In the past four AMS elections (January each year), besides voting for President, Vice Presidents etc, students voted to allocate \$8000 among competing media (mostly blogs) that covered the election campaigns.

I donated the \$8000 for 2007 and for 2008; the AMS paid it for 2009 and 2010.

For January 2010 I also developed a “Continuous VoterMedia” ballot at votermedia.org/communities/82-ubc-ams. This is designed to enable students to vote funding to media all year round, in contrast to the “One-Time VoterMedia” on the election ballot once a year. Features comparison table at votermedia.org/ubc2010.

We tested Continuous in January 2010, running it in parallel with One-Time. I donated a \$2000 award pool. Then in March 2010, the Arts Undergrad Society funded \$1500 of Continuous for their rep elections. All these developments are chronicled at votermedia.blogspot.com.

Continuous is automated; can easily be used by other voter communities.

B. Blind Men & Elephant – What does VoterMedia feel like to different disciplines?

1. Journalism:

- a new source of funding for media
- may help solve problem of declining revenue for public journalism
- media incentives shape what kind of media?
- future of journalism: blogger power?

2. Political Science:

- checks & balances in a democratic system --
 - on the government and on the other media
 - funding dissent, political opposition
- electoral reform --
 - continuous allocation of power via amounts of funding
 - easier to start this reform because it's an add-on – don't need to replace anything
 - closer to direct democracy
 - real-time democracy – recall any time, gradually
- a substitute for campaign finance reform? – see votermedia.blogspot.com/2010/03/vfm-for-bc-municipal-elections.html

- international relations -- reduce conflicts caused by leaders pursuing their own interests while harming citizens; green taxes for global VoterMedia?

3. Economics:

- competitive markets for public goods
- why VoterMedia differs from private sector media & from vouchers

VoterMedia could support --

- public policy think tanks
- Consumer Reports
- creative commons:
 - music, video, pharma research, literature, etc.
 - especially powerful when VoterMedia for large communities – USA, world – fund from green taxes?

- a kind of communism that works?

4. Business:

- VoterMedia for democracies = privatizing/outsourcing government
- monitoring of government as a competitive for-profit business
- competition for voter support may reduce influence of special-interest lobbying (e.g. less cartels)

- brand reputation of funded organizations vs political parties; need broad cross-sectional sample; why doesn't that work for parties?

- VoterMedia for corporations = privatizing the regulation of corporations
- corporate governance as a for-profit business consulting service

- can also use VoterMedia for investor education, other shared infrastructure

- a kind of capitalism that works?

5. Law:

- constitutional law, free speech, corporate law

- What might VoterMedia do to the legislative process, our legal system, our police system, crime...?

- change drug laws?

- police accountability – VoterMedia can support more independent monitors of police

- stronger independent advocates for human rights, checking abuses by those in power

- better support for whistleblowers

- greater trust could encourage police-citizen cooperation

- reduce the costs of a legal system that encourages expensive legal conflict
- simplification of tax laws