

# Correspondence

## Chile: democratizing policies online

Chile became a political hotbed in a matter of days last month. Amid the chaos, people demanded reforms to the country's privatized pension and health-care systems, a new constitution, and punitive measures for tax dodgers and companies involved in price-fixing. But their voices need to be aggregated if they are not to be lost in the din of rallies or fragmented into thousands of tweets.

To this end, we created the experimental platform Chilecracia, using crowdsourcing methods already validated in academia. Examples include MIT's Place Pulse (P. Saleses *et al.* *PLoS ONE* 8, e68400; 2013) and Moral Machine (E. Awad *et al.* *Nature* 563, 59–64; 2018). Chilecracia pairs policy proposals and asks: "What would you prioritize?" Within 10 days, more than 120,000 people had indicated at least one preference, amounting to more than 7 million votes. The data are helping us to compile detailed networks of policy preferences (see [chilecracia.org](http://chilecracia.org)).

Chilecracia is being updated weekly with the help of a team of policy experts. We have received requests from several countries to deploy regional, organizational and national instances of the system. Our findings add to the growing literature on such surveys (see [go.nature.com/2qiwoja](http://go.nature.com/2qiwoja)) and offer insight into online crowdsourced participation systems in politically active situations.

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Huge demonstrations have swept through Chile since mid-October.

## Chile: science could tackle social unrest

Finding solutions to Chile's current social turmoil will demand efforts from every sector, including the research community (see *Nature* 575, 265–266; 2019). Our contribution will depend on government support for a more ambitious, participatory policy for science, technology and innovation.

In the past, Chile's science policy has focused on boosting productivity and economic growth. However, the problems highlighted by the latest social unrest are unlikely to be solved just by increasing gross domestic product (see also P. A. Besnier *Nature* 511, 385; 2014).

Creating a more comprehensive science and innovation policy will also require a new, improved way of doing politics. More players must be involved, including citizen representatives, to allow their perspective to optimize future policies for society's well-being.

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## Don't bury hidden treasure

There is much to applaud in the EON-ROSE (Earth-system Observing Network-Réseau d'Observation du Système Terrestre) project to understand Canada's geology and to find geothermal energy (see *Nature* 574, 463–464; 2019). But as your heading 'Hidden treasure' indicates, there are also commercial implications in prospecting for mineral deposits.

The boundaries between science, economics and politics are often invisible. Scientific ventures should always be open about their potentially commercial objectives, as in the EON-ROSE case, particularly if they are financed by funding agencies and indirectly by taxpayers.

In my view, scientists should reject outright any subsidies that support the search for and development of carbon-based energy and of environmentally destructive mineral extraction.

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## Writer's secret? No interruptions

Your piece 'Day in the life of a 24-hour global news factory' revived memories of my only visit to the *Nature* office (see [go.nature.com/2k9scd1](http://go.nature.com/2k9scd1)). The occasion was in the early 1980s, when John Maddox was in his second term as editor-in-chief and he invited me to report news stories from India for the journal. He wrote many himself, one of which included an interview with Indira Gandhi, the country's prime minister at the time (see *Nature* 308, 582; 1984).

When I met the great man again, he was in hospital being treated for a leg injury. He passed his days there avidly reading, writing and editing as usual. I enquired after his secret of being able to write such insightful editorials on a host of topics – ranging from physics to philosophy – week after week. His reply was that he always firmly shut his office door, allowing no phone calls or other interruptions until he had completed his next editorial.

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