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In-Focus

# E-Participation Forum Promotes Democracy and Regional Development

## Introduction

Mayors other officials, representatives of international organizations and scholars from 37 countries gathered to discuss how best to achieve e-Government with high levels of citizen services and involvement at the municipal and regional levels, met in South Korea on February 7-9, 2007 under the auspices of the Mayor of Guro District of Seoul. The event was co-hosted by the Global Cities Dialogue, chaired by Andre Santini, Mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux, France. At the conclusion of the event, the more than 100 delegates participating adopted the Guro Declaration.

The kind assistance by Chan-Gon Kim, PhD, Vice Mayor of Guro District, Seoul, is highly appreciated. The presentations and related materials from the Forum can be downloaded at: www1.guro.go.kr/eforum/sub_program_daily.html.

The Guro Declaration was prepared and endorsed by majors from cities in more than 30 countries. The Declaration is intended to promote the realization of e-Government through e-Governance, the widest possible participation of the people in public affairs. The Guro Declaration recognizes "the importance of mayoral leadership and responsibility to establish a vision of e-government, informatization policy and building infrastructure to strengthen the citizens' capacity for informatization." The Declaration further recognizes "that supporting e-business of industries should be the number one priority to create employment and activate the local economy." Mayors agreed it is necessary to expand "cooperative efforts for technical assistance and consultation for under-developed cities in terms of e-Government to improve the capacity of the world's cities' informatization."

The Mayor of Guro, Dae Woong Yang expressed pleasure that the Forum was being held in Seoul at this time "when e-Democracy, particularly e-Participation, is emerging as a global issue. As well, Korea is now at the forefront of this trend, and the Guro has become a pioneer in this field."

The Mayor noted that Guro District is aptly referred to as the "Silicon Valley of Seoul," as it is home to no less that 6,000 IT companies, offering the best services to its people and companies, using state-of-the-art ICT under the slogan Digital Guro. "Guro is now pursuing democratic and transparent implementation of concrete e-Participation programs," the Mayor continued, "This Forum 2007 was organized to serve as a platform where Guro could share its experience with other cities in the world, and look for more effective ways of realizing the benefits of e-Participation."

## E-Participation Promotes Democracy

Session I focused on the general significance of e-Government and e-Democracy. Speakers debated the concept of e-Democracy, the different types of participation, impact of e-Participation (such as trust in government), obstacles to effective e-Participation and how to overcome those problems for active e-Participation.

Professor William H. Dutton, Director, Oxford Internet Institute (OII),

University of Oxford, UK, reviewed early visions of "digital democracy" that were formed around notions of "public information utilities." Dutton traced the progress of tele-Democracy resulting from the ubiquity of the telephone and other advances in technology. Television also has become pervasive but high costs and limitations on applications have never made TV the medium for local democracy. Today, provision of information through a Website is considered a main

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achievement of local governments. The complete text of Professor Dutton's paper is printed below.

The preconditions of democratic e-Governance were reviewed by Professor Dr. Ari-Veikko Anttiroiko, University of Tampere, Finland. It is important to clarify terminology between the concepts of e-Governance, e-Government and e-Democracy, he pointed out. An extensive discussion is presented as well as comparisons of each of the concepts, particularly their inter-related nature. Democratic e-Governance has been influenced by the growth of technology; however, there is a need to ensure that technology is applied along more democratic lines. The structures and processes of Democratic e-Governance is extensively analyzed as well as the need for new analytical tools for understanding new demands resulting from societal change in this global information age. The complete text of Professor Anttiroiko's paper is printed below.

Session II presented issues of e-Participation in Local Government and Best Practices, analyzing the direction being taken by e-Participation in local governments based on different types of e-Participation in local government; and presented best practices of Global Cities Dialogue members and the Guro District.

The Electronic Democracy Program in Korea reflects the use of Internet by more than 74% of the population resulting in significant political and social change. This is documented in many ways; however, participatory democracy has been strengthened by the establishment of the Online Citizen Participation Portal. This was described by Nam Seok Kim, of the Ministry of Government and Home Affairs, Korea. The necessity for the portal service has been confirmed by improvements in national participation in the Policy, Administration, Information and Decisions (PAID) by the People "the embodiment for electronic democracy realization."

The Online Portal Service involves: (1) Petitions that link suggestions drawn from petitions to citizens; (2) citizens proposals; (3) policy participation in electronic public hearings and examining public questions; and (4) new groups of citizen participation. Citizen's difficulties control commission leads and manages these operations by attempting to integrate these issues.

A paper addressing The Declining Public Trust in Government and Prospect of e-Democracy in Japan was presented by Akira Nakamura, PhD, Vice President and Dean of the Graduate School, Meiji University, Tokyo, Japan. Using a series of comparisons of public trust in Government, Parliament and Officials in Germany, Spain, Sweden, Norway, England, the USA, Korea and Japan, Prof. Nakamura provided evidence of growing distrust in governments. Another table was presented on Individual Responsibility vs. Government Responsibility in the same countries. The results are that a significant trend exists in France, Germany, England and the USA toward individual responsibility, whereas in Italy, Korea and Japan the public continues to believe that government should have main responsibilities to oversee nations.

In Japan, Prof. Nakamura found e-Participation is unusually low because of the lack of venues and means of introducing public comments. In particular, surveys have found: (1) solicitation for comments comes late; (2) comments induce little change; (3) public comments receive no attention; and (4) business groups send a bulk of the comments. E-Voting could be a useful form of e-Participation in Japan, but this is considered: (1) a costly experience; (2) has been met with a lack of enthusiasm; and (3) manual election procedures continue to be highly attractive to voters. Prospects for e-Democracy in Japan are facing a number of challenges, such as problems of e-Literacy, protection of privacy, and a dichotomy between modern technology and improving quality of democracy.

Session 3 discussed how regional development can be achieved through e-Governance and ICT. The feasibility of establishing a network and use of ICT for strategic regional development and the role of local government were debated. As well, the extent that e-Participation builds capacity for regional development. The Guro Digital Complex was presented as a best practice focusing on its relationships with enterprise.

The Governor of Bangkok, Thailand, Mr. Apirak Kosayodhin, explained that Bangkok has an area of 1,600 square kilometers; 2.1 million houses and buildings; a daytime population of 10 million and a hub of local business, international trade and tourism. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) is the local government established with responsibility for overseeing the management of Bangkok city. BMA has 44 compulsory responsibilities assigned by law, a staff of 85, officials and more than 600 affiliated offices. Regarding public services, long queues were usual situation, red tape and paperwork was extensive, and citizens often had to contact several officials to obtain service. There was not a single contact point.

Governor Apirak described how ICT has become a daily necessity in Bangkok to achieve four R's objectives: red tape reduction; rapid response; round the clock service; and rural coverage. Municipal officials recognized that "citizens are our customers, civil servants must work in a proactive way; public participa-

tion is a key factor towards success; and transparency is significant. To achieve these goals, the government established a high-speed backbone for information flows linking BMA offices. Information portals were implemented for easy access. The public may participate by e-mail, websites, call centers, brochures, SMS, leaflets, etc A program of e-Services was adopted to provide online services. An extensive program of e-Education has been established. The e-Participation program provides e-Permits, e-Payments, e-Procurement and other on-site services.

"The BMA Service Center is a One-Stop Service using ICT is reducing unnecessary steps; simplifying paper forms; making all information online for retrieval; computer-aided pre-service information inquires ensure smooth service delivery; and a friendly working environment has been created," summarized Governor Apirak.

A presentation on Information Sharing and Regional Development, using Yangtze River Delta (YRD) as a case example, was presented by Professor Wang Yizhi, Professor of Industrial Economics and Director of the Information Institute, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, China. The objective of the project is establishing a regional Information System (IS) platform that facilitates information sharing between administrative divisions of government and within the region between cities and provinces. The YRD is one of the most developed regions in the informatization process of China and includes E-Government in Shanghai.

Professor Wang outlined the principal project fields involving information sharing in YRD. These include: credit data about enterprises, protection of customer rights, designing intelligent expressways in the region, real estate, information about markets for agricultural products, and information sharing and integration of standard services. A program of coordination among institutions has been established whereby meetings of main institutions are held regularly; the resource sharing is reinforced by Development and Reform Commissions at provincial level; and Information Centers affiliated with 16 municipal governments in YRD set up institutions of information cooperation for working together.

## In-Focus

# Guro Declaration

We, Mayors from the world's cities, have gathered in Guro District, Seoul, Korea from February 7 to 8 for 'e-Participation Forum 2007' under the them of "Promoting Democracy & Regional Development."

We have held valuable discussions on the development of citizen's e-Participation. Recognizing the realistic possibility that we can diminish the overall digital divide among the world's cities and realize e-democracy through e-governance, a global trend in the twenty-first century, we adopt this Guro Declaration to put the Declaration of Helsinki into effect.

We, Mayors from the world's cities, declare that:

**Quality of Citizens' Lives be Improved Through Practicing E-Government and E-Democracy**

- We agree on the important role of e-governance as an administrative tool which provides the right information and speedy public services to the citizens. We recognize that e-governance also enhances efficiency, transparency and accountability through citizens participating in the policy making process.
- We recognize that e-democracy realized by e-participation is the ultimate stage of e-governance.
- We recognize the importance of mayoral leadership and reiterate our responsibility to establish the vision of e-government, informatization policy and building infrastructure to strengthen the citizens' capacity for informatization.

**Industries be Invigorated and Local Economy be Revitalized Through E-Government for Citizens' Better Life**

- We note that to boost the local economy, increasing the competitiveness of industry is essential. To this end, we recognize that mayors should actively provide e-government skills and services for businesses including e-commerce, e-procurement, e-Tax and e-consultation.
- Recognizing that supporting e-business of industries should be the number one priority to create employment and activate the local economy, we acknowledge that this will contribute to solving the expanding wealth divide problem of the rich getting richer while the poor get poorer.
- With a strong commitment to establishing a means for mutual cooperation between city government and business, we reaffirm that finding and spreading a model for best practices should be a matter of consequence.

**In Accordance with this Shared Understanding, We Agree to Create a Network of World Cities to Support the Development of E-Government**

- To share the benefits of e-government by eliminating digital inequality among nations, regions and classes, we aspire to build a worldwide digital network, which accelerates the realization of an effective information society environment.
- To achieve this goal, we agree to establish a website to share experiences and skills, for instance, each city's best practice and the process of solving problems encountered during the implementation of e-government practices.
- We recognize that our cooperative efforts for technical assistance, education and consultation for under-developed cities in terms of e-government are necessary to improve the capacity of the world's cities informatization. In addition, we propose building a human resource pool consisting of e-government experts as a way to support such cities.

We endorse in full the Guro Declaration agreed by Mayors from the world's cities at 'e-Participation Forum 2007' in Guro District, Seoul.

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In-Focus

# Democratic e-Governance – Basic Concepts, Issues and Future Trends

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In this paper I briefly discuss the preconditions of democratic e-governance, which in this context emphasizes the role of technology in government-citizen interaction designed along the principles of participatory democracy.

I will first provide some clarification to the terminology of this research field and outline the connections between the concepts of e-Governance, e-Government and e-Democracy. The next section discusses structures and processes of democratic e-Governance. Lastly, issues of e-participation as a core of democratic e-Governance are outlined followed by a discussion of the development towards ubiquitous network democracy as a possible future direction of e-Democracy.

The main message of this presentation is to highlight the need to conceptual clarity of this field as well as a need to focus on transformative power of ICTs in reinventing our conceptions and practices of democratic governance.

## Conceptual Field of Democratic e-Governance

It is important to understand the relationships of the three basic concepts: e-Government, e-governance and e-democracy. The concepts of e-Government and e-governance are in many contexts used interchangeably. Some scholars and practitioners use 'governance' to describe the ways the government operates, whereas some others claim that the concept of governance has a specific meaning. For example, Finger and Langenberg [8] define governance as the growing involvement of non-state actors in collective problem-solving. Some other scholars associate governance with the connection between government and its broader environment [11]. This terminological confusion emerged in the wake of the introduction of the term 'governance' in the early 1990s to describe non-hierarchical ways of organizing public policies, service provision and development activities. As the concept of democracy has an inherent connection to certain aspects of government and governance, it has its place of this conceptual field as well. These concepts are schematically illustrated in Fig. 1.

Technology brings a new element to this conceptual field. Let us start with concise operational definitions of the three core concepts with a view to utilization of information and communication technologies (ICTs):

- *e-Government* is about all political-administrative operations of governments in which ICTs are utilized.
- *e-Governance* – understood here in a public-sector context as public e-governance – is about managing and steering multi-sectoral stakeholder relations with the help of ICTs the purpose of taking care of policy, service and development functions of government.
- *e-Democracy* refers to democratic structures and processes in which ICTs are utilized.

All these approaches can be used as conceptual frames when discussing democratic interaction in policy-making process and aspects of government-citizen interaction, such as e-participation, e-inclusion, access to information networks, knowledge sharing and

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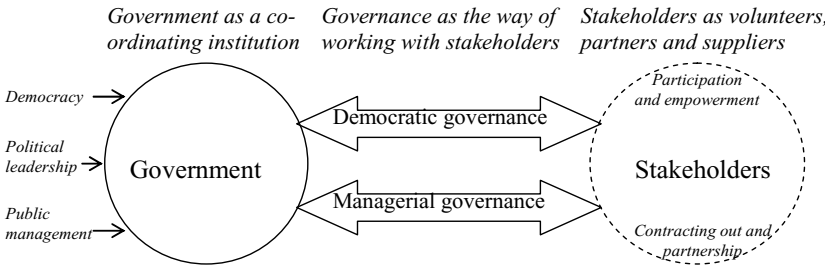


Fig. 1. Two faces of broadly defined public governance.

communication. For example, if we study citizen participation from the point of view of *e-Government*, we take the government's policies and active role as the starting point in conceptualizing and promoting e-participation. Similarly, from the point of view of *e-Governance* we may approach e-Participation as an instance of democratic e-Governance, for example as an expression of governance by citizens and communities with the help of ICTs. Lastly, the same topic can be addressed from the point of view of *e-Democracy* as a set of operational forms of e-democracy or e-participation which are designed to guarantee our democratic rights as citizens or members of political community. The point is that all these approaches or inter-related research areas have historical backgrounds, theories and emphases of their own, as briefly outlined in Table 1, but at the same time their approaches to government-citizen interaction are fairly close to each other.

The rule of thumb is that the choice of concept must be based on the perspective on issues under discussion. The conceptual boundaries are and will inevitably be blurred, but the application of Table 1 and some related principles help to make at least a satisfactory demarcation between these fundamental concepts. Their inter-related nature is summarized in Fig. 2.

The current discussion about e-government focuses increasingly on *e-Governance* rather than the traditional hierarchical and supply-side oriented conceptions of e-government or e-Administration. Thus, most of the currently available literature on e-governance is rooted in ICT-driven government reform projects, which tend to blur the boundaries between e-government and e-governance [8,11, p. 629; p. 634]. This is a result of increased attention to government's external relations, new forms of organization, development orientation in public sector and the impact of pervasive contextual tendencies. One consequence is that e-government has often been defined in relational terms, using the basic governance relations as the constitutive elements of the concept of e-government (cf. Song [24, pp. 11–12, 53–54]. The concept of e-Government defined by OECD [20] serves as a good example of this:

> *"E-government provides an opportunity to develop a new relationship between governments, citizens, service users and businesses, by using new ICTs which enable the dissemination and collection of information and services both within and outside of government* (*government to citizen; government to business; government to government*) *for the purposes of service delivery, decision making and accountability."*

The OECD's relational approach has become probably the most widely used conception of e-Government in the current literature. Such a relational perspective emphasizes the ways ICTs can be utilized in interaction between governments and their customers and other stakeholders.

This same shift has resulted in a fusion of e-government and e-democracy discussion, as one of the most important perspectives on public governance relates to democratic control, inclusiveness and forms of citizen participation with the help of ICTs.

The concept of *democratic e-Governance* can be used as an umbrella concept that combines these three perspectives. Let us take a closer look at this concept.

## Activities in Democratic e-Governance

*Democratic e-Governance* is a technologically mediated interaction in transparent policy-making, development and service processes in which political institutions can exercise effective democratic control and, more importantly, in which citizens have a chance to participate and effectively influence relevant issues through various institutionally organized and legitimate modes of participation [2, pp. 40–41].

Because our current democratic system relies mainly on a *representative system of government*, the core of democratic e-governance is essentially about interac-

Table 1
Comparison of e-government, e-democracy and e-governance

| | e-Government | e-Democracy | e-Governance |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conceptual core | *Government* = institutionalized public authority and its executive functions | *Democracy* = principles and arrangements that enable rule by the people | *Governance* = processes or activities of managing stakeholder relationships in policy processes |
| Role of government | Collective decision-making, regulation and law and order | To secure citizens' democratic rights and responsiveness of government | Utilization of resources of a community by using power to initiate and to create partnerships |
| Basic theory arsenal | Theories of the state and of government applied to e-government | Democratic theories applied to e-democracy | Theories of governance applied to public e-governance |
| Paradigmatic actors | Legislature, executive or government agency | Citizens and their representatives | Stakeholders in different sectors (government, business, civil society) |
| Principal mode of organization | Hierarchy within politico-administrative system | Hierarchies within representative system of government | Networks, partnerships, quasi-markets and markets |
| Approach to ICTs | Facilitating government functions: administration, services, democracy, public governance | Facilitating citizen-centered democratic processes and citizen participation | Facilitating multi-stakeholder governance processes |
| Paradigmatic e-enabled practice | Provision of government information and public services electronically | Using e-consultation and discussion forums to map out people's preferences on policy issues | e-Networking and e-commerce as tools of public governance |

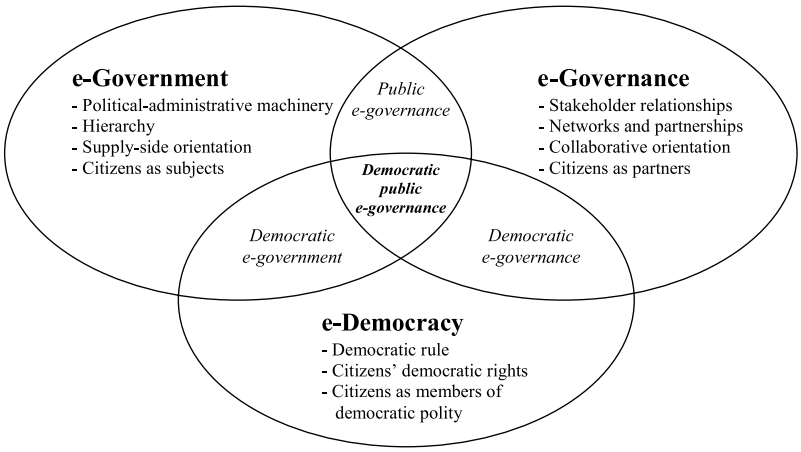


Fig. 2. Conceptual intersections of e-government, e-democracy and e-governance.

tion between citizens, politicians and administrations. This implies that *government* as an institution works within democratic framework and that *citizens* having their democratic rights express, aggregate and pursue their interests within a formal democratic system backed up and supported by government. Yet, there is a lot that people can do outside the formal democratic institutions and modes of participation, but these activities form a part of broadly defined democratic governance. For example, there are examples of how interactive applications and forums associated with the Internet and Web 2.0, from wikimedia to Youtube to mobile services, have affected societal and political life. As noted, these are not official arrangements, but represent a kind of civic activism and interaction that together with free media is a precondition of a functioning democracy. Such civic groups, community networks and *e-communities* need to be strengthened as a part of the fabric of democracy as they [4]:

– contribute to pluralism
– are a source of information and feedback
– provide a platform for the exchange of information and deliberation
– provide a pool of knowledge, voluntary work, and other forms of engagement, and
– help to increase the commitment of communities to local development.

To combine these elements we get a rough picture of how e-government, e-democracy and e-communities

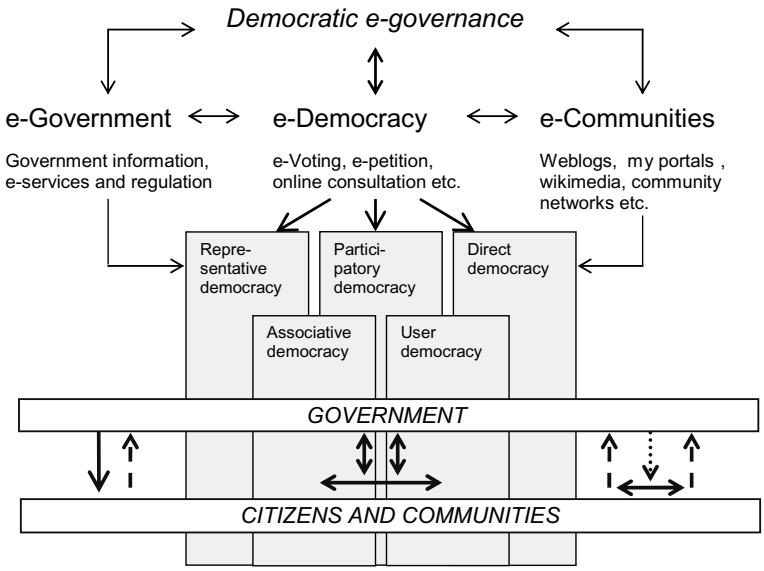


Fig. 3. e-Government, e-democracy and e-communities. (Cf. [26]).

constitute the activities of democratic e-governance. This scheme is illustrated in Fig 3.

Since the 1990s a need for the reconstruction of *technology* along more democratic lines has become apparent. New ICTs have a potential to restructure government and to strengthen democracy, and to create a closer relationship between public administration and citizens [21, p. 95]. See also [6]. It has even been said that new ICTs applied by government contribute to the emergence of a different type of democratic governance, i.e. more "direct" government, as concluded by Pardo [21, pp. 90–91]. In this way ICTs carries with it a potential to contribute to participatory forms of democracy and to the overall democratization of society [5].

e-Democracy is a generic tool-oriented conception of democracy. In order to better understand the nature of e-democracy, we need to connect it to traditional democratic theories. This reveals that there are different kinds of theories of e-democracy and different ideas of the paradigmatic e-tools for democracy. *Representative democracy* emphasizes the use of e-voting in elections and the use of new media in electoral and political processes. *Participatory democracy*, which has a close connection to deliberative democracy, emphasizes the use of the tools of e-participation, such as e-consultation, e-citizens' juries, e-petitions, electronic town meetings and alike. *Direct democracy* is a radical 'unmediated' form of democracy, which emphasizes the use of e-referenda as a paradigmatic tool. There are also new supplementary forms of democracy that are worth taking into the picture: *associative democracy* which emphasizes the tools of e-networking and e-commerce used in managing partnerships and stakeholder relations and *user democracy*, in which e-vouchers and similar tools are used by individuals or small user groups in service consumption. These theories are included in Fig. 3.

## Structures and Processes of Democratic e-Governance

e-Democracy combines two fundamental elements, *technological mediation tools* and *institutional arrangements* that can be said to be democratic (see Fig. 4). One of the expected strengths of participatory e-democracy is its ability to combine a *discursive public sphere* with the *decision-making sphere*, and thus to eliminate hierarchical relations which characterize the contemporary representative systems of government. What this means in practice is better quality information, more direct communication, more transparent administration, and a better understanding of public affairs. Even if civic involvement in this process is very important, a large part of this potential can be realized only if local, regional and national governments and institutions of macro-regional and global governance are actively involved in this transformative process.

Gross [9, p. 250] summarises the basic requirements of e-democracy in the following way: citizens need to be able to access information, to discuss political

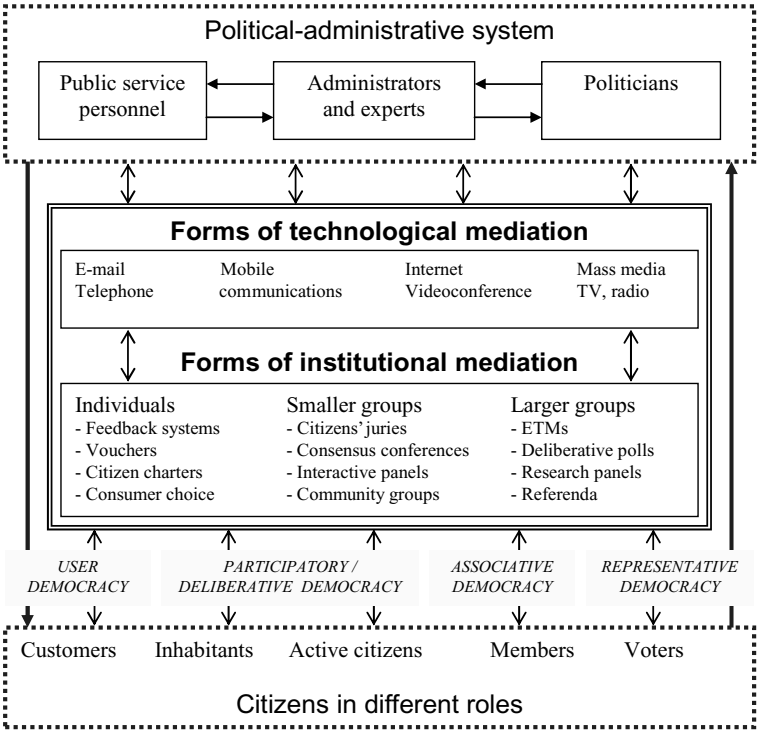


Fig. 4. Institutional and technological mediation in democratic governance.

issues, and to make decisions by voting electronically. Fairly similar logic is followed in the UNDESA e-Participation Framework – including a. Increasing e-information to citizens; b. Enhancing e-consultation for deliberative and participatory processes; and c. Supporting e-decision making [25] – and the scheme developed by Dr. Chan-Gon Kim [15] in which four stages of digital democracy are identified: (1) information disclosure, (2) listening/feedback, (3) online deliberation, and (4) online decision-making. These schemes show in an illuminating way the key elements of e-democracy process, which also serve as the foundation of e-democracy maturity model. The basic elements of the e-democracy process moulded into a conventional management cycle is presented in Fig. 5.

Methods of democratic e-Governance are based on the functions they serve in policy process. On the basis of the functions of institutional and technological mediation tools, the methods applicable in e-governance may serve such activities as information sharing, citizen consultation, deliberation and negotiation, planning and preparation, electioneering, decision making, implementation of public policies and evaluation. This means that the range of methods is very wide and that these methods need to be designed to serve selected aspects of the democracy process with a careful consideration of the context within which they are applied. (See [2,6,9,10].)

## Critical Issues

A challenge to democratic theory is to provide analytical tools for understanding new demands resulting from profound societal changes, and also to open new horizons to how to organize 'rule by the people' in the global information age (on contextual changes see e.g. [7]). In a practical sense this translates into the following kinds of critical questions:

1. How do the *contextual* pressures and challenges condition democracy in practical terms?
2. How to improve the *institutional* mediation mechanisms of a democratic system?
3. How to develop and apply *technological* mediation tools in democratic governance?
4. How to take into account the varieties, scopes and levels of *political issues* in the design of a democratic system?
5. How should different phases of a *democratic process* be developed so that this process becomes comprehensive, smooth and inclusive?

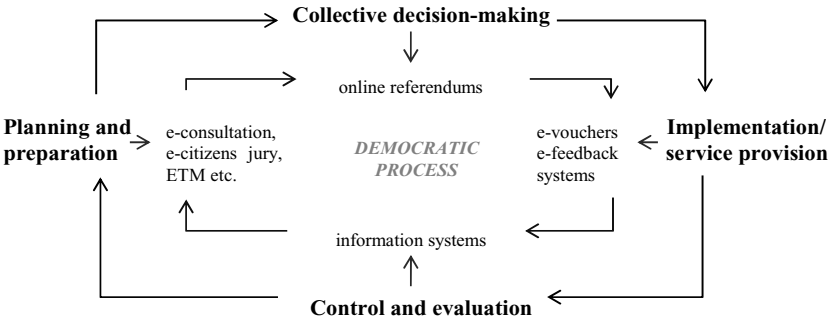


Fig. 5. Process view to e-democracy [4].

The first task in the list above is to contextualize the field of citizen influence and participation. This means that *changes in social structures, institutions and mentalities* have to be identified and taken into account when assessing the processes and outcomes of democratic system. The second element, referred to here as *institutional mediation mechanisms*, determines how citizens can or may influence and control collective decisions. These mechanisms have a decisive role in operationalising different models of democracy. Thirdly, *technological mediation tools* as such are transforming the field of public governance and citizen influence. Contemporary societies rely heavily on many kinds of mediation tools and channels of influence, varying from letters to the editor to the use of cable TV, networked computers, and mobile and wireless applications. (Anttiroiko 2004.) The fourth task is to consider the scope and level of *political issues*, because many wicked problems must be discussed and decided at different institutional levels and also because multilevel governance is increasingly a reality that affects the functioning and credibility of democratic institutions. Lastly, people should have their say in different *phases of democratic process*, from planning to decision making to implementation, and they should be able to construct a coherent view of such a process.

To summarize, when introducing ICTs in participatory citizen-centered governance (e-Participation in practical terms) for the purpose of facilitating information, communication and transaction processes, the following three key points should be addressed: (a) e-Participation must be integrated into existing institutional structure to guarantee connection to decision sphere and administrative practices, (b) e-Participation must allow true civic influence on issues of interest in order to make the processes meaningful and thus to avoid frustration, and (c) e-Participation must be possible in different phases of the e-democracy process, following the special nature and requirements of each phase [1].

## Towards Ubiquitous Future

What may be in progress in advanced democracies is the formation of a *mosaic-like democracy* in which a considerable part of legitimate decision-making takes place in different public forums, within a third sector, in the realm of civil society, and occasionally even with the help of market mechanism. At the same time a formal political system may, provided the democratization really affects the course of events, develop toward new participatory forms [1].

A technological trend that may have a deep long-term impact on the preconditions of democracy relates to *ubiquity*. Due to the Internet revolution and new developments in ubiquitous technology the perspective started to shift from ubiquity of computing capabilities to ubiquity of network access and connections. Such a transition widens the perspectives of original mobile computing towards a more diverse and flexible IT environment [3,19,22,23]. Around the early 2000s this development gave rise to the ideas of u-society and u-life and is slowly extending to the realm of democracy as well.

The ubiquitous network can be seen as an IT usage environment providing access to a broadband network from literally anywhere. Thus, it extends the use of a computer in a workroom or an office to other terminals and to other usage situations, from living rooms to public space and from streets to moving cars or trains. In addition, a ubiquitous network environment makes it possible to transmit almost anything via the network. (Cf. [19, p. 7].)

The most important aspect of the emerging u-society is expected to be *the new forms of interaction and trans-*

*action that are possible anywhere and at any time due to the utilization of networks and applications based on ubiquitous technologies* [3]. Wireless networks and mobile services started to pave way for this new paradigm in the 1990s, but a more radical transformation is likely to occur within the next ten to fifteen years. This development can legitimately be seen to pose a challenge and also to provide new opportunities to democracy. How should democratic structures and processes be changed in a society in which opportunities for interaction become possible at any place and at any time? u-Democracy is still and will for a long time be an underdeveloped concept, but it will most likely be brought to the global democracy reform agenda sooner or later.

It would be interesting to see how the most developed u-societies, such as South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, Finland, Sweden and some others will utilize this opportunity. For example, South Korea is particularly interesting because its determined development of democracy got started as late as in the late 1980s, but the country has already built a functioning democratic system. Moreover, due to South Korea's phenomenal development in broadband connections and ubiquitous communication systems [14,18] and determined development of e-government [13,24], the preconditions for building u-community networks, u-participation forums, u-feedback channels and u-consultation systems are already in place (see e.g. [15]). Especially if numerous Korean digital city and u-city projects are designed to serve as platforms of u-democracy pilot projects, South Korea may become a leading innovator in u-democracy (e.g. [17]). A good indication of this is that Seoul was ranked number one in the world in a recent global ranking of municipal websites [12].

## Conclusion

Due to pervasive global trends there are pressures to develop democratic systems towards hybrid models which flexibly combine various aspects of democratic governance. Increased complexity requires more complex, yet manageable democratic arrangements. At a general level the tool-oriented conception of e-democracy may become an integrative form of democracy that helps to integrate different forms and mechanisms of democratic governance, thus contributing to our ability to cope with the requirements of informational network society.

New forms of governance may give rise to network democracy and technological development may provide fruitful soil for the development of ubiquitous democracy, which may converge into a new paradigm in democratic theory. Such a hybrid form of democracy may be characterized as ubiquitous network democracy, in which democratic principles are extended to flexible and partly personalized network-based multi-level governance with the help of ubiquitous technologies.

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In-Focus

# e-Democracy: Reconfiguring Participation in Governance and Public Policy

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For decades, attempts have been made to use electronic and, later, digital Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to improve citizen participation in governance and public policy.

Early visions of such a 'digital democracy' formed in the 1960s and 70s around notions such as a 'public information utility,' which built on the early database and information access roles of mainframes, and then, minicomputers, with their potential for remote access. Citizens would be linking to computers to get free public information. But these visions were viewed as utopian; with few people believed that widespread citizen access to computers was plausible.

Then, and in the decades since, visionaries, inspired by the nature of new technological developments, have shaped images of digital democracy.

As communications moved more center stage in the ICT mix, interest grew in innovations tied to two-way cable communication, then videotext, followed by the personal computer, electronic bulletin boards, local community networks and moves toward 'e-democracy' linked to diffusion of the Internet and Web. More recently including leading Web 2.0 social networking applications have fostered user-generated content and social networks in ways that have enabled citizens to realize their own communicative power to challenge traditional government–citizen relationships.

## Early Tele-Democracy Examples

It was the ubiquity of the telephone and television that enabled some of the most exciting innovations in electronic democracy, which came to be called 'tele-democracy.'

Ken Laudon, one of the early students of tele-democracy, saw great potential in telephone conferencing since he believed that the most important role of telecommunications in pluralist democracies was to support communication among citizens, permitting them to organize around common interests, rather than supporting communication between citizens and their government. But the telephone was too taken-for-granted to inspire politicians or the public.

Television was another matter, particularly with the invention of multi-channel coaxial cable communication, which promised to end spectrum scarcity and permit many more channels of TV into the home, including local and interactive TV.

Two pioneering projects – Hi-OVIS in Japan and QUBE in the US – illustrate the shift during the 1970s towards local and interactive TV and other media that had previously been one-way channels of broadcast entertainment and news. Both pioneered applications tied to local tele-democracy.

Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry supported HI-OVIS – the Highly Interactive-Optical Visual Information System – from 1978 to 1986 in the Higashi-Ikoma residential district in Nara prefecture. It experimented with interactive TV, video conferencing, request video, electronic shopping, character and still picture information services, and news. Households could watch what was later called 'video-on-demand,' with a robot in the central studio retrieving a requested video cassette and plugging it into a video tape mon-

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itor for play back to the home. Fascinating experiments with two-way video enabled HI-OVIS to provide live videoconferences on public issues, and to enable households to vote and be polled on issues through a handheld remote control.

In the US, the 30-channel interactive cable QUBE television system was introduced by Warner-Amex in Columbus, Ohio in 1977. It sought to test the commercial viability of new two-way forms of communications, such as polling viewers' opinions or enabling them to perform transactions such as ordering a pay-TV program. QUBE could also monitor how TV sets were being used to test-market new programming. But its closure in 1984 became a symbol of the demise of interactive cable TV, despite the fact that the experiment gave birth to successful national channels like Nickelodeon for children and MTV for popular music fans. As with HI-OVIS, this system was used to support public meetings, such as in the development of a town plan, and permit viewers to be polled from their home on various options. QUBE spread to other localities and was used to poll households on their reactions to a speech by US President Jimmy Carter moments after his address to the nation.

Despite the visionary and practical advances of these systems, their viability was undermined by the limited popularity, high costs and other limitations of the technology. For instance, Hi-OVIS allowed a feed from a video camera installed on top of the household's TV set to be transmitted to the cable head-end and then broadcast live to the other Hi-OVIS households. This was felt by some to clash with cultural traditions in Japan that discouraged individuals from attracting such individual attention to them.

These experiments also raised concerns over so-called 'push-button' democracy – with images of citizens rolling over on their couch to vote on an important public issue without adequate information or public deliberation. This concern is as prominent today as in the 1970s, when people speak of 'point-and-click' democracy.

In the 1990s interactive TV became a media industry buzzword again, by when the decade-earlier innovation was forgotten as others competed to claim supposed 'firsts' in live video on demand. And it took until the 21st Century for broadband to become sufficiently widely available to provide a reliable, widely available and reasonable infrastructure to support the high technical demands of interactive multimedia.

**The Ascendance of Digital Democracy**

Another factor undermining local and interactive cable TV as a medium for local democracy was the development of other new technologies – first videotext, and then the personal computer.

For instance, the Public Electronic Network (PEN) in Santa Monica, California USA became a pioneering 'electronic city hall' when it was launched in 1986, offering a municipally owned email and computer conferencing system. This system was designed as an alternative to building a local and interactive cable system to support participation in the city's governance.

Using PEN, the city's residents could use a home personal computer or a terminal in various public locations. From these, citizens could access free information about city issues, government and services; complete some limited transactions with the City government, such as applying for a license; participate in conferences; and send email to city departments, elected officials and other PEN users. Some managers did not want PEN to support communication among citizens, since commercial networks were designed to serve this function. But communication among citizens proved to be a key to the system.

This was reflected in the popularity of participation in online conferences on topics of local concern, which was a breakthrough at the time. At its peak in the early 1990s, 5% (4,505) of Santa Monica's residents were registered to use PEN of which about four to six hundred used it every month. Most of the total number of accesses were to PEN computer conferences, in some ways heralding the current boom in Web 2.0 social networking.

Although PEN was of value in stimulating discussion, communicating with key opinion leaders and offering an opportunity for a new set of people to become involved in local government, participation declined in the face of controversy over the civility of discussions and with the migration of the information that was on PEN to open Websites in the early 1990s.

An interesting example of the kind of challenge to government that is becoming ever more urgent to address was the way one of the leading political champions of PEN lost some enthusiasm when he discovered he had spent much time debating with a 14-year old that didn't have the right to vote. If 21st Century digital democracy is to be meaningful, engaging imaginatively with new ranges of citizens in novel ways must be found as the boundaries of local communities become blurred in virtual space.

## The Web 2.0 Revolution: You at the Centre of your Own Global Networks

Many of the ideas sown in systems like Qube and PEN have matured in the subsequent decades as ideas like online discussion forums and consultations and interaction with governments have become more common. The Web also transformed information provision, as illustrated by its making redundant the information provision feature of PEN. Without a doubt, the diffusion of the Internet and World Wide Web undermined the viability of Santa Monica's local experiment as well as many other local experiments with electronic democracy.

For many local governments, the provision of information through a Website – typically with limited interactive capabilities – as an electronic brochure – became their prime albeit limited and low cost contribution to 'e-democracy.'

Attention moved to what is generally seen as a separate area of 'e-government,' where new forms of online transactions grew, such as filing income tax returns online.

But then along came the development and diffusion of Web 2.0, a new generation of multimedia broadband Web applications oriented around social networking and user-generated content, in which information provision still plays a key role in informing searches and choices.

The Web 2.0 'revolution' as it was called by Time magazine was a principal reason why the publication named 'You' – that is, all of us – its Person of the Year for 2006. Its award said this was 'a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before,' including 'the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people's network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace ... It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes.'

In other words, Web 2.0 has helped people to seize their newly enhanced communicative power as they sit, walk or ride while being at the centre of what the author of Megatrends, John Naisbitt, vividly described the really powerful new virtual networks 'where every member of it experiences that they are in the centre, and all the information is coming and going through us: we are the nexus, we are the centre.' These new technologies are enabling individuals and groups to better configure their access to friends, family, work colleagues, government and commercial services, entertainment, news, games, reference works and many other resources that give them new choices over how they live their lives.

In such ways, Web 2.0, like all innovations in ICTs, reconfigures access to information, people and services. It does this by facilitating the production and dissemination of news, opinion and creative content such as music and videos – making many users into producers. This used to be the preserve of programmers and gatekeepers in government, business and media industries with the resources to own and run the channels of communication, using content produced largely by professionals. Now, a blogosphere and citizen journalists communicating round the world, often faster and occasionally with more impact than the traditional media, populate Web 2.0.

For example, unofficial images of the hanging of Saddam Hussein were available shortly after the official Iraqi government video was released, showing how difficult it is for government or other previous strong gatekeepers to holdback the flow of user-generated content in cyberspace, coming from technologies as personal as mobile phones as well as more sophisticated digital technologies.

Is this new? I believe it is. Government might still fear that citizens would have the power to be polled and vote on issues being considered by public bodies. But now, governments worry less about whether citizens will be voting and rating their speeches and policy measures, and more about whether citizens will be listening to them at all. Instead of governments having a monopoly on creating systems for citizen participation, citizens and the public at large are creating systems on which politicians and government agencies need to consider participating, attending, and responding.

## How a Digital Generation Could Transform Democratic Engagement

A generation born since 1980 and earlier is growing up at ease in cyberspace. This is also the generation often most disengaged from formal political involvement. However, there is a potential for government and policy makers to listen to what the popularity of certain Web 2.0 applications says about their interests and tap the creativity being unleashed by Web 2.0 possibilities. They might then be better able to reach and engage this public and all those with a growing set of skills in navigating within online worlds.

The best way to demonstrate the exciting changes being made possible is by citing just a few examples, since much discussion of this conference will focus on these and similar innovations. But let me simply observe that since I first started doing research on digital democracy, about thirty years ago, I have generally had to talk more about the future. Now, new instances of what can be done already, and used by practitioners, are too numerous to track. They include:

*Social networking*

New forms of instantaneous social networking were seen as the potentially most distinctive and valuable democratizing Web 2.0 innovation. These include MySpace: YouTube, and SecondLife, a virtual environment that was recently used. It was used to conduct interviews with participants at the World Economic Forum in Davos, in January 2007.

*Mashups*

A mashup is a Website or application that integrates content from multiple sources. Joining the growing online mashup in effective and imaginative ways, some as simple as providing a link, could help government to forge new connections with citizens. Mashup sites include applications that over-lay city maps with crime statistics to better inform citizens, and others to compile information on politicians.

*Citizen journalism*

The ease of creating an online newsletter or blog and disseminating it without going through traditional communication gatekeepers provides a local and global space where anyone can become a journalist or their own news editor, such as OhMyNews, Global Voices Online and Who's Your Baghdaddy?

Governments and politicians need not only to be aware of these new sources of information – and misinformation, but also have the ability to move in Internet time to respond, correct and inform the public through similar channels.

**Direct political engagement**

There are also new forms of more direct political engagement:

- E-petitions. A service enabling e-petitions to the UK Prime Minister's Office saw the volume of traffic doubling to 2.8 million after its first month, including over 50,000 signatures for the post popular petition (on road pricing) by December 2006. E-petitioning to the Scottish Parliament is more directly integrated into the formal parliamentary process, with a Public Petitions Committee deciding which are formally presented.
- Web TV: Visitors to the 10 Downing Street Website have been asked to send in questions they want the Prime Minister to answer, with journalists conducting an interview by Webcam choosing which to ask.
- HearFromYourMP: Allows cumulative interest by constituents of a British Member of Parliament (MP) to combine forces to put e-mail pressure on MPs to respond, with an ability to check response rates and share replies and comments with other constituents.
- Citizen Calling: Enabled young people in the UK to use mobile phones to submit evidence on the criminal justice system to a Parliamentary Committee.

**What About Those on the Offline Side Of Digital Divides?**

I have so far highlighted the opportunities for new forms of connection through digital networks that enhance citizens' communicative power by enabling them to reconfigure access to information and other resources to their own advantage. However, for many sectors of society such reconfiguring of access means being disconnected in a communicatively disempowered offline world – and not by choice.

Discussion of inequalities in Internet use has generally focused on the divide in physical access to the technology. However, many other divides in patterns of use also exist between different segments of society (e.g. age, gender, education, wealth). For instance, the Oxford Internet Surveys (OxIS) in Great Britain show that 98 percent of people at school leaving age have Internet access, but only 30 percent of those of retirement age.

However, for many young people this access is mainly at school, leaving significant divides even within this age group. And their use is focused on entertainment, such as downloading music, meaning that they are cut off from information of value to democratic participation – but by their own choice.

It is therefore critical that politicians and governments use the new media creatively to strategically reshape access in ways that enable more citizens to gain the ability to exploit the potential of the Internet and Web not only to entertain themselves but to improve their access to public information, to support deliberation among citizens as well as consultations between governments and citizens, to obtain public services, and acquire the know-how to participate effectively as leaders and citizens of a network society.

**What Lessons Can We Draw from this History?**

I've only touched on a few examples, but they serve to illustrate some general themes of my very short and partial history of digital democracy:

- Clearly, this history illustrates the length of time it can take for a democratizing vision to become a feasible reality. The visions behind today's initiatives arose in previous decades. However, technology continues to move faster than the habits and practices of people, which cannot keep up with the pace of change. To say there is a Google generation is to acknowledge than many people do not have the skills or comfort to work in virtual worlds.
- Many innovations in the use of ICTs for democratic engagements have started as local experiments. I think there can be a sufficient level of trust and community at the local level to enable these innovations to be championed. While the network society is global, politics is local, and these global networks can be used to complement rather than compete with local efforts to organize and participate in public affairs, but only if local communities use them strategically.
- Politicians and public officials' worries about voting and polling might be exaggerated. Let me emphasize here that I am not speaking of 'electronic voting' in official elections, or what has been called 'remote Internet voting.' I am convinced that the security issues surrounding these innovations are too major to resolve in the short-term. I am referring to facilities for letting people express their preferences, from their reactions to a President's speech to ideas on new legislation. A growing range of experiments over the decades illustrate that voting facilities – from push button phones to Web surveys, polling and petitioning are ways to engage the public, providing the public with a say, enabling meaningful feedback (such as showing how their views compare with other citizens), and informing public debate – all without taking authoritative actions that bind government. Opinion polls have been with us for decades. 'Point and click' democracy can sometimes be used as a dystopian rhetoric to stop harmless input to public debate. The public understand games, simulations, straw votes. Are they really a threat or a complement to representative forms of democracy?
- Communication among citizens – as supported by social networking and horizontal forms of communication – is as important if not more so than government-citizen communication. However, governments and public officials can facilitate civil discussions and debates by establishing public spaces with democratic rules of order. All democratic forums are governed by rules of order and forums in cyberspace will require them as well.
- However, it is no longer simply a matter of governments creating tools to support democratic participation. These tools are being developed by others and used by bloggers, Internet users, first and second lifers to communicate about public issues and policy. It will be critical for government officials and politicians to learn how to participate in this virtual space and to do so in Internet time.

Proponents as well as the opponents of e-Democracy have often been criticized for accepting a technologically deterministic view on the role of new media. However, like other ICTs, the new media like that enabled by Web 2.0 is two-edged, capable of undermining as well as enhancing democratic participation. It is therefore important to understand first that the Internet and other media and communication technologies matter – they can enable actors to 'reconfigure access' to information, people, services and technologies. Viewed from this perspective, the use of the Internet and related ICTs, like the mobile phone, can reconfigure participation in governance and public policy.

However, it will require inspired public policies, politicians and public officials with a strategic understanding of what new technologies can enable, and citizens with access to the Internet and related ICTs, the

skills to exploit them, and an interest in public affairs, to foster digital democracy.

The Internet will not transform an unimaginative politician or an apathetic public, but – at the margins – it can be – and I am sure it will be – used in ways that will enhance the communicative power of citizens in Guru and around the world.