Comparative Project on Local e-Democracy Initiatives in Europe and North America

by

Michael N. Peart

and

Javier Ramos Diaz

e-Democracy Centre
Research Centre on Direct Democracy
Faculty of Law
University of Geneva, Switzerland

Submitted for consideration to the European Science Foundation – Toward Electronic Democracy (TED) Program

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
TABLE OF CONTENTS

JANUARY 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK .............................................................................................. 2

   1. DEFINITIONS .................................................................................................................. 4

   2. TYPOLOGY OF E-DEMOCRACY INITIATIVES ......................................................... 5

III. RESEARCH STRATEGIES ................................................................................................. 8

IV. CASE STUDIES .................................................................................................................. 9

   ESTONIA ........................................................................................................................... 9
     1. Context ....................................................................................................................... 9
     2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy ................................................................................. 10
     3. Overview of Initiatives .......................................................................................... 10

   HUNGARY ........................................................................................................................ 13
     1. Context ....................................................................................................................... 13
     2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy ................................................................................. 15
     3. Overview of Initiatives .......................................................................................... 16

   ITALY .................................................................................................................................. 20
     1. Context ....................................................................................................................... 20
     2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy ................................................................................. 21
     3. Overview of Initiatives .......................................................................................... 22

   SPAIN .................................................................................................................................. 26
     1. Context ....................................................................................................................... 26
     2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy ................................................................................. 27
     3. Overview of Initiatives .......................................................................................... 28

   SWITZERLAND ..................................................................................................................... 33
     1. Context ....................................................................................................................... 33
     2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy ................................................................................. 34
     3. Overview of Initiatives .......................................................................................... 35

   UNITED KINGDOM ............................................................................................................ 38
     1. Context ....................................................................................................................... 38
     2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy ................................................................................. 40
     3. Overview of Initiatives .......................................................................................... 41

   UNITED STATES ............................................................................................................... 45
     1. Context ....................................................................................................................... 45
     2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy ................................................................................. 47
     3. Overview of Initiatives .......................................................................................... 49

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ............................................................................................... 56

   1. COMPARATIVE MATRIX ............................................................................................ 56

   2. CHANNELS OF INTERACTION ................................................................................. 59

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .................................................................. 62

ANNEX 1: NOTABLE INITIATIVES ......................................................................................... 66
I. INTRODUCTION

While many of the ideas of the Ancients about democracy have carried on into the present, their implementation has certainly seen many revisions. While some governments still make decisions with hand counts, it is hard to ignore the potential revolutionary force of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to transform those raised hands into clicks of a mouse. While at one time local town meetings provided a forum where citizens could create a common dialogue and the public sphere could exist as a shared idea, video-conferencing is beginning to raise important questions about the importance of physical proximity. Is it still possible to have political dialogue and community when the medium of interaction is through digital bytes of information, millions of zeros and ones? While the answer to that question is anything but clear, it is certainly evident that democracy today faces many hurdles. The capitalization of most democracies has made time worth money and often the combination of labor and social class differences keeps citizens from playing an active role in their society and political community. So given that political community has many challenges today anyway, it makes sense to investigate the ways in which, with the help of new technology, open-minded politicians and public servants can bring the political process to the people – and not just to the people, but directly to their living rooms, offices, and cell-phones.

Despite the widespread take-up of e-government across the world, and the studies dedicated to this topic, surprisingly little cross-national comparative research has been undertaken on the connected issue of e-democracy. This investigation addresses that gap by analyzing e-democracy developments across one North American and six European countries. Specifically, the investigation targets practices of local e-democracy in the Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The focus is upon developments especially at a sub-national level and, most particularly (but not exclusively), upon local government sponsored initiatives.

In fact, while we did not expect much innovation in the provision of e-democracy services, we were startled by the amount that is being accomplished in many places with little to no budget. It seems that more and more governments are offering web-forums as a means of replacing the town meeting or the public \textit{agora}. Moreover, it is increasingly common to be able to offer feedback to your elected
officials via email, web forms, and even SMS. In order to be heard, citizens need only a minimal level of technology and can raise their voice in their spare time at home instead of having to meet their politicians face to face. Aside from the major trends, we are happy to see an ever-expanding interest in the combination of technologies to revolutionize the interaction between citizens and their governments with the help of ICTs. The combination of audio/visual feeds, automatic text-based reports of legislation, political blogs, and even podcasts are accelerating the changes in the way democracy manifests itself in the digital age.

As it is a fundamentally social concept, democracy, we offer herein an investigation of how new technologies affect political society at the local level in Europe and North America.
II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The aim of this section is to give some background and context to the e-democracy initiatives we have focused upon in this investigation. Thus, as any good academic study must, we will begin with some definitions. Next, we provide a typology for classifying e-democracy initiatives. Finally, this section offers an analysis of the democratic context against and within which e-democracy must be understood.

1. Definitions

Despite widespread take-up of e-government activities across the world as ICTs have become as affordable as they are ubiquitous, and the correlative increase in research focused on this particular area, comparatively little investigation has taken place into the connected issue of e-democracy. Before examining strategies of e-democracy therefore, it is only responsible to offer a definition which distinguishes them from practices of e-government. To that end, we offer the following definitions:

“e-Democracy consists of all electronic means of communication that enable/empower citizens in their efforts to hold rulers/politicians accountable for their actions in the public realm. Depending on the aspect of democracy being promoted, e-democracy can employ different techniques: (1) for increasing the transparency of the political process; (2) for enhancing the direct involvement and participation of citizens; and (3) improving the quality of opinion formation by opening new spaces of information and deliberation.”

E-government, on the other hand, “refers to use of information and communication technologies for making government operate more efficiently.” Clearly, the two concepts share many similarities. While there is a grey area between them, making the difference hazy at times, their distinctiveness must not be understated and bears clarification.

E-democracy relates to those uses of ICTs which provide either novel or more efficient, practicable means for citizens to exercise influence in the governing process. In other words, this term applies when ICTs are used to revolutionize the relationship between citizen and representative. E-government, however, is a term that can be invoked to describe those uses of ICTs which do one of two things. First, under the

---


paradigm of organizational theory, they may make the interaction between different agencies and different bureaucrats more efficient, as they do for private firms. Second, they may make the relationship between the government bureaucracy and the citizen, in the sense of a political consumer, more comfortable and efficient by reducing transaction costs. To put it another way, when a citizen can pay a fine or fill out a property tax form online, this is an example of e-government.

In many cases, e-government and e-democracy initiatives may emerge at the same time as various levels of government increase their reliance upon, as well as familiarity with, ICTs. Despite this overlap, their conceptual distinctiveness is critical to this report as it defines the very scope of investigation.

2. Typology of e-Democracy Initiatives

Implicit within this definition of e-democracy are three different types of e-democracy practices. Throughout this report, these initiatives are classified by the elements of the democratic process which they work to enhance: transparency, participation, and deliberation. This point bears further explanation and thus each is treated in turn.

E-democracy projects that work to increase the transparency of the political and democratic processes take advantage of ICTs to bring information to citizens that would not otherwise be available. In the examples uncovered by this report, there are two major types of transparency initiative. The first type simply provides a central source for information about the government and its activities. The second type of e-democracy initiative that works to increase transparency is that which uses ICTs and especially Web2.0 technology to make massive text-based, audio, and even visual records of government activity available on citizens’ computer screens. Often the information made available in this way can be pre-sorted in terms of topic or author in order to present the citizen with exactly that information which he or she desires. These two major types of initiatives effectively summarize the larger dimension of transparency-enhancing e-democracy initiatives.

---

3 For example, a government website would fulfill these criteria. See the example of the Canton of Geneva, discussed in the Switzerland Case Study in Section IV.

4 See the “Webcasting” section of US “Brief assessment and common patterns” in Annex I for an example.
The second dimension of e-democracy initiative consists of those uses of ICTs that promote citizen participation in the governing process. There are three major subtypes to this dimension. The first type is a direct revolution of the voting process that allows citizens to vote online. The second, and by far most common, subtype is that of “citizen feedback” or “e-consultation.” This type of e-democracy initiative can be as simple as offering a form for citizens to fill out online or as well-organized as question and answer chat sessions with mayors or a governor or could even include a system that allows citizens to offer advice via SMS. The third type offers citizens the option of participating in tradition political processes online. For instance, a system that allows citizens to give online feedback on budget allocation or to launch a ballot initiative online transform the means by which citizens can participate in political processes, making it much easier thanks to mediation by ICTs. While the latter two subtypes offers citizens the chance to communicate with and give feedback to their representatives in new and potentially simpler ways, the former offers a new way to participate in selecting those representatives in the first place. In both cases, however, ICTs are beginning to make participation in modern democracies, the level of which has been decreasing over the last generations, as easy as the click of a button. The result of this is not only the potential for higher participation in processes that citizens have traditionally had access too. What is more, the ease of participating online may open new forums for citizens to participate where were simply not possible due to logistical constraints before the transfer to ICTs as a mediator.

The third type of e-democracy initiative is that which attempts to recreate a sense of the public sphere online. In general, these initiatives offer citizens of the local region or municipality the option of participating in a discussion forum that is intended to be a space to raise issues of local importance. In some cases, these discussion forums are simply a place for discussion, supplanting the literal public space which is becoming less and less important in an era dominated by computerized

---

5 See “National Electoral Committee – e-Voting” case study from Estonia as well as the “E-voting in Anières, Genève” case study from Switzerland.

6 See for example, the HearFromYourMP program in the UK or the Pueblo Digital in the Jun municipality in Spain.

7 See US, Hungarian, and Spanish case studies primarily for the examples mentioned.

8 See, for example, “Komló Forum” case study from Hungary, “Demos.ct” case study from Italy, and “Tapa Municipality Public Forum” case study from Estonia.
communication and telecommuting. In other instances, however, these discussion forums serve as the ingredients with which legislation is formed as the discussion threads are often officially monitored by legislators and administrators to gain ideas. Overall, those projects that fit this third archetype of e-democracy initiative harness the interactive capacity of ICTs to allow citizens to talk to each other via the new medium that is replacing physical public space. In addition to online, text-based forums, some of the most exciting initiatives make available the option of more interactive forums. The critical departure from the web forum is the real time element. This could be an online chat session with a municipal leader. A more innovative example is the provision of a video Question and Answer session with an administrative leader where citizens can create a dialogue directly with a politician.

This report will rely on this tripartite typology of e-democracy initiatives in order to provide a framework not only for classification, which is necessary for any investigation of new phenomena, but also to provide qualitatively distinct subdivisions of an emerging research agenda and maintain a consistent methodological approach in this endeavor. To that end, we turn now to a further explication of our research strategy.

---

10 See, for example, “Ciudadanos2020.net” case study from Spain.
11 See the example of the Online Mayor program in Budapest, Hungary, below.
12 See the program run by the Governor of California, US, Arnold Schwarzenegger, covered below.
III. RESEARCH STRATEGIES

Given this typology, the research strategy is essentially to apply these different criteria to both typify a very diverse sampling of e-democracy strategies and then to isolate major trends and highlight important innovations. Our first hypothesis is that most of the projects will fall into the “participation-enhancing category” and “transparency enhancing” categories as citizen consultation and government web pages require little work and offer a high rate of return. Citizen consultation can be as simple as a form that web users can fill out to express an opinion and thus are easily implemented. Furthermore, enhancing transparency can easily be accomplished with the creation of a government website and constantly updating it with material. Our second hypothesis is that the more northern and western countries will be the most advanced and innovative given their larger budgets and greater levels of internet penetration.

Our research strategy has two stages. In the first stage we gather the data in order to provide the raw material for analysis. More specifically, we developed a questionnaire and sent it to experts associated with e-democracy initiatives in each of the countries. We have included in the report three case studies from each country to demonstrate the work done. We selected these cases to be included (Annex I) based on the quality and interest of the project as well as with the aim to provide a diverse array of initiatives. However, many more e-democracy projects are referenced through out the project. We then took that information and combined it with a detailed country synopsis in order to properly situate the initiatives in their context.

The second stage of the report is the comparative analysis. In this section we present a classification of the projects we focused upon and a list of various e-democracy practices that fall into each dimension of the typology. We then analyze the ways in which the dimensions interact and how the specific projects have interacted in order to derive some general conclusions about the process of introducing practices of e-democracy. In the end, we were pleasantly surprised by the results.

13 Many of these examples thanks to the work of Dr. Lawrence Pratchett at DeMontfort University.
IV. CASE STUDIES

Estonia

Estonia is a small country with a big commitment to e-democracy. All but sprinting at top-speed away from its Soviet past, the Estonian government is experimenting a great deal with its new democracy. Like many newly independent states, the democratic institutions in Estonia are fragile and the trust in government is generally low. However, with its recent accession to both the EU and NATO, its economy has turned upward and its realignment toward the West has accelerated. For the most part, e-democracy initiatives in Estonia focus on either improving participation or fostering deliberation. It must also be highlighted that Estonia is one of two states in the survey which has carried out binding elections that included the option of internet voting.

1. Context

The Republic of Estonia is a small unitary state on the Baltic Sea with a total population of around 1.3 million residents. It relies upon a system of constitutional democracy with a President elected by a unicameral parliament. The President appoints the Prime Minister to head the executive branch with the help of up to 14 Ministers. Elections are held every 4 years. The country is divided into 15 counties for the sake of administering the national government. Within these counties, there are essentially two types of municipality of importance here. “Towns” tend to be larger municipalities (more like what elsewhere is know as a city). “Rural municipalities” are conglomerations of smaller villages that are clustered in the same area. Just under a third of the population (roughly 400,000) is located in the biggest city and capital, Tallinn, on the country’s north coast. There are only three cities in the country with a population of more than 50,000 and an overwhelming majority of municipalities have a population of less than 3,000.

Under such a centralized governmental arrangement, most of the money is concentrated in the national government in Tallinn. In fact, while local authorities can and do raise taxes, this income constitutes less than 2% of their yearly budget. Thus, most of their money comes from the central government in a redistributive fashion. The central government each year has a budget that is equal to 35.1% of the country’s GDP. Municipalities in Estonia are run in a similar fashion to most western cities, with a mayor and a city council. The local governments have a combined budget of
8.9% of GDP. On the national level, the State Chancellery is responsible for the development of e-democracy initiatives. So far it has been charged with the creation of an “e-participation portal.” On the municipal level, it is typically the department of public relations or a member of the administration, if anybody at all, that is responsible for programs related to e-democracy.

2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy

It is important to establish the general background against which e-democracy initiatives take place. The most important piece of context here is the general attitude toward democracy and its accompanying institutions in this young republic. The top three problems that the Estonian democracy faces today are 1) fragility of civil society structures, 2) low voter turnout especially for local elections (47.4% turnout in 2005), and 3) the low reputation of political parties. In order to overcome these obstacles, the Estonian Parliament created the Estonian Civil Society Development Concept (known as EKAK) with the intention of outlining a strategy by which the public sector can cooperate with private organizations to help reinforce Estonian civil society. One of the explicitly stated goals of the EKAK is to promote citizen involvement in the political decision-making process through the use of ICTs. Also, as an attempt to raise the rate of participation, specifically voter turnout, the Estonian government introduced binding internet voting beginning in the 2005 elections. In such a small country as Estonia, even small changes in opinion can have large effects on the national community. In the next section, we outline those steps that the government has begun to take in order to change these negative opinions or feelings of apathy toward the country’s burgeoning democracy.

3. Overview of Initiatives

Despite the low levels of general trust in the government, there were no outstanding examples of e-democracy that aimed to enhance transparency. Classifying the rest according to the typology given in the conceptual framework section shows a heavy focus of most Estonian e-democracy projects on opening new spaces for public deliberation. There are two notable exceptions, which we now discuss, that attempt to offer citizens new ways to participate in the governmental process.
Internet voting, which we will refer to as e-voting in this report, fits into a broader strategy by the national level government to offer a wide array of e-services to its constituency. One important step in realizing that ambition was to institute a national ID card system that enabled citizens to verify citizen identity when conducting business with the government online. By the end of 2001, the Public Key Infrastructure, as it is known, was developed and operational. After four years of issuing the ID cards, by 2006 about 900,000 had been issued, accounting for about 85% of registered voters in Estonia. During the 2006 elections, e-voting was offered four to six days before the national polls opened. In the end, only 9,287 e-votes were cast, or 1.85% of all votes cast in those elections. Despite a relatively low turnout for the e-voting portion of the elections, it is significant to note that almost all the registered voters have the option of doing so, given the national ID card system. The next case we discuss bridges the gap between enhancing participation and fostering new spaces for deliberation.

As part of the general expansion of e-government services that began around 2001, the then-prime minister Mart Laar pushed forward a project to allow an online collaborative space or portal, called TOM (Estonian acronym for “Today I Decide”) where citizens can debate new ideas and propose them to their representatives for consideration. This project bridges the gap between participation and deliberation because in the preliminary stages, it allows citizens to propose new ideas, receive feedback from other participants, and then revise the original idea accordingly in a process that can take up to a few weeks. Once the idea has received feedback and been revised, it is then sent to the Ministry with which it is concerned for consideration. The Ministry is required to respond to the idea within one month and is posted on the TOM portal. Thus, the second stage, after citizen deliberation has taken place, is the point at which citizens are thus offered a new means of participating in the government. Having already presented one Estonian e-democracy project that opens new spaces for deliberation, we now give two further examples.

Both of these purely deliberative initiatives take place on the municipal level. The first is an online forum run by the city of Tartu in 2005 in order to solve one

---

14 See project website: [http://www.vvk.ee/engindex.html](http://www.vvk.ee/engindex.html)
15 See the Today I Decide website: [www.eesti.ee/tom](http://www.eesti.ee/tom)
16 See the Tartu Forum at: [http://www.tartu.ee/?lang_id=1&menu_id=2&page_id=3125](http://www.tartu.ee/?lang_id=1&menu_id=2&page_id=3125)
specific local problem. The forum is part of the municipal website but is a section specifically devoted to finding a unique solution to the problems presented by the estimated 10,000 unregistered residents of the city, mostly among the student population. Specifically, the forum asked for the users’ best ideas to encourage people to register with the city. With only 70 participants, the web forum was woefully under-used. This does not take away from the innovative nature of this project, one of the first of its kind to harness the benefits of plurality-based decision making or problem solving. The second example, which is a bit more successful, is a web forum\(^1\) to encourage coalescence amongst the citizens of a newly amalgamated municipality, known as Tapa. Having just adopted two smaller municipalities under its administrative umbrella, the city’s government felt it was important to create an online political space to help absorb the new constituencies into the city’s collective identity. The project began in December 2005 and continues to this day. Both projects are purely municipal-level projects and are funded as such. Together with the TOM portal, they demonstrate the heavy focus in Estonia on opening up new spaces for political discussion with the help of ICTs.

Despite such cutting edge experimentation for such a small country, Estonia’s burgeoning e-democracy programs may be doing very little to reinforce the faltering public faith in the country’s institutions of democracy. While internet penetration is very high, these e-democracy initiatives are generally under-utilized. While this is almost certainly the symptom of the general juvenescence of the idea of conducting politics online in this post-communist country, it also indicates a lack of faith in government institutions. Perhaps more useful would be e-democracy services that allow for greater transparency between the citizens and their governments. However, it is a laudable achievement to be host not only to the only nation-wide, binding e-voting but also to have provided so many online forums to foster political discussion in a country that only 15 years ago was under the yoke of communism. This sort of accomplishment is quite characteristic of Estonia’s rapid re-alignment with the Western Europe.

\(^1\) See the Tapa Forum at: [http://www.tapa.ee/](http://www.tapa.ee/)
Hungary

For a country where local governments are facing fiscal shortages and there is no central administrative apparatus in charge of e-democracy initiatives, Hungary is a country with a surprisingly strong track record of local e-democracy. By far the most popular type of e-democracy initiative, as classified by our typology, is deliberation. In fact, online political forums can be found in municipalities as varied as small, rural, mostly farming towns to the largest cities in the country. Hungary, however, faces some major problems in this area. First of all, the poor distribution of wealth has created a powerful digital divide. Second, the relative youth of the democratic apparatus has left the associated institutions fairly weak and oftentimes they do not behave in the most democratic of ways. Finally, the recent Communist history has left a precedent of corrupt management of public funds that persists to today. Thus, e-democracy in Hungary is a chance to remedy the general mistrust of government that has characterized the popular attitude for two generations. Furthermore, the use of ICTs to include more and more people in the democratic process is a way for cash-strapped local governments to govern more efficiently. Overall, despite these impediments, Hungary’s various local governments are on the vanguard of those public administrations who tap the power of ICTs to open new spaces for democracy to flourish.

1. Context

Hungary is a small central European country with a population of roughly ten million people. The governmental structure is a unitary, democratic state. The national level government is organized in a parliamentarian system. In general, the municipal governments are constitutionally granted a certain level of sovereignty, but this level is interpreted by the Parliament, which can also change that level if it sees fit. The governmental system is relatively centralized in political, social, and economic aspects. Regional and local governments, nonetheless, enjoy a large amount of legal autonomy. It is this autonomy that sets the background for the widespread, autonomous, municipal-level experimentation with e-democracy.

Hungary’s population is relatively distributed as roughly 90% of its registered municipalities have less than 5,000 people. On the other hand, this means that many residents are concentrated in the large urban areas, leaving few moderately sized cities. The municipal level of government has traditionally been the most important
in Hungary’s history and this remains significant to this day. The county-level, which is semi-regional, has also been traditionally important, even throughout the Communist area. Although this is changing, and they no longer have the ability to levy their own taxes, they retain somewhat of an important administrative role. Budapest, the largest of Hungary’s cities by far, as well as its capitol, has a two-tiered government. The top level enjoys the same power as a county, and the lower levels are on the level of a typical municipality.

Municipal governments enjoy a large amount of legal autonomy yet they also have many responsibilities to their citizens in terms of service provision (education, healthcare, other welfare state functions, etc). This leaves the question of where the tax authority rests and how the budgets are thus determined. The most prominent tax is the local business tax, which goes to the municipal government. This, as well as a few other purely local taxes account for 10% of municipal budgets on average. Another 15% comes from taxes shared jointly with the national government. Top-down funding structures provide for any excess income the municipal governments might need. To put this in terms of GDP, the entire public administration spends 42.2% of GDP overall. Specifically local governments spend 11.7% of GDP. The annual GDP of Hungary is roughly 170 billion.\(^{18}\)

The government is administered on the national level by a unicameral parliament, a prime minister, and a President of the Republic. On the local level, the situation is much different. Cities have a mayor and a city council. Normally, only the mayor is a full-time, paid employee in charge of administration. In smaller towns, the mayor works part time and a small number of city councilors are paid part-time wages. Party leaders, too, often are paid on a part-time basis. However overall, most local politics takes place on a part-time basis. The mayor is almost always a pure administrator; most of the decision-making is done by the city council, although it may transfer much of its authority to the mayor and other committees. In the chain of command downward from the national level, despite a high centralization of politics, there is no official organ of the national government in charge of e-democracy. The Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Ministry of Informatics are jointly responsible for

\(^{18}\) All information in this paragraph is taken from the Hungary country report or directly from the World Bank (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/GDP_PPP.pdf)
e-government and this is as close as it gets. Thus, e-democracy initiatives are almost invariably autonomously undertaken by the municipal leadership.

2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy

As a country that is beginning political life anew in the shadow of its communist past, the problems facing this democracy are different from those of western democracies. The first main problem, as already mentioned, is a weak sense of institutionalization of democratic practices. As a result, democratic principles are often ignored simply because they are not guaranteed by entrenched practices. Second, there is unfortunately a high level of corruption in the distribution of public funds due to a lack of adequate oversight. Thus, the expectation of truly democratic practices amongst and between governmental bodies is as low as the frequency of well-administered funding structures. In other words, despite municipal governments relying on funding from central authorities for their initiatives, often this funding is unreliable. Legislation is generally being considered as a way to combat these problems. More specifically, Hungarian governmental authorities are beginning to adopt plans to apply ICTs to traditional bureaucratic administration, hoping that the introduction of e-government practices might end some of the corruption.

One major innovation this is ushering in is the publication of all government information online. This movement toward ICT-enhanced transparency is a significant step toward regaining the trust of the general population. More importantly, in the context of e-democracy, this will allow private groups to organize lobbying and social movement campaigns better, incorporating themselves into the structure of internet-enabled politics. However, a major obstacle to these burgeoning attempts at enhancing transparency with the help of ICTs is the lack of money at the local level. With the national level government trying hard to pay down its debt, top-down funding is becoming scarcer and scarcer as a source of income for municipal governments. To compound the problem, many businesses and residents are moving away from more rural municipalities, as well as lower class urban ones, to the wealthier urban areas leaving many local governments with very little income. However, as the next section demonstrates, the general lack of funding has led to demonstrable innovation on the local level, with open-source solutions helping those governments with little cash flow sponsor progressive e-democracy initiatives.
3. Overview of Initiatives

The easiest way to organize the results of this investigation in Hungary is to present the initiatives that were uncovered according to the typology presented in the conceptual framework. It must be noted at the top that in each of these cases, funding was provided almost exclusively by the local administration. The second trend that is apparent is the heavy focus on forums run with open source technology. These two trends fit very well with the politico-economic situation of the country’s municipal governments. We begin with those initiatives that enhance transparency, move to those that allow novel forms of participation, and finish with those that open up novel spaces for political discussion and dialogue that owe their existence entirely to the use of ICTs to construct these new spaces.

There were three major cases uncovered whose focus was on increasing transparency concerning the political process. The first takes place in the municipality of Papa with a population of 33,341 and falling. The project aims to construct an online presence for the municipal government with the stated goal of gathering and consolidating the citizens’ opinions. The website19 however, does not offer a forum for such a purpose. In this sense it merely provides information. The project, it is important to note, was funded by the municipal government’s department of cultural issues. The second case takes place in the municipality of Pilisvorosvar and is primarily a website aimed at including the blind. The website20 achieves this by avoiding frames and providing a non-graphics version that makes it suitable for reading software. This rests at the level of transparency because it brings information about the government to those who could not easily access it before. It should be noted that this constitutes one of the few cases of e-democracy initiatives addressing the digital divide. The final example is significant because of the size of the municipality in which it takes place. The city of Pécs, a metropolitan center of 157,000 in southern Hungary, initiated a free WiFi hotspot21 in the center of the city in an attempt to encourage citizens to sign online and get information about the government. The move is mostly a symbolic attempt to show that the municipal

19 http://www.papa.hu/letoltes/informatikai_strategia.pdf
20 http://akadalymentes.pilisvorosvar.hu
government has nothing to hide but is also an attempt to broaden the reach of ICTs so as to lay a framework for future e-democracy initiatives. While these initiatives are relatively simple and serve only to provide information rather than foster new political spaces or voices, initiatives that increase transparency are important for this country to move beyond its closed, communist legacy.

The second type of initiative is that which opens new modes of participation to citizens using ICTs as an intermediary. Initiated by an informal group convened by the mayor, the first example is from a town called Siofok on Lake Balaton and is popular vacation spot with only 22,255 registered, year-round residents. The aim of the project\(^{22}\) is to provide a forum where citizens can raise concerns over local issues from the construction of new public pathways to issues to be discussed at the council level. The website was initially run on open-source technology and is now administered by a private company. The second example takes place in a district of Budapest known as Pestszentlőrinc-Pesitimre (Budapest District XVIII) and is a platform that allows users to send a question to local administrators via cell phone with an SMS. The questions are answered either via regular mail or by SMS. The project was initially realized by collaboration with Nextel, a cell-phone carrier. The final project in the participation category took place in the Dunaujvaros municipality, a city with 55,000 residents. The intention of this project is to establish an e-point\(^{23}\) where the citizens can e-mail questions to their government officials. The questions are responded to by a committee and the reply given by email. This allows the citizens of this municipality a new way to participation in the political process by offering opinions and raising new points to their representatives from the comfort of their homes. The e-democracy initiatives in this category for Hungary are very simple but still very important for raising the level of confidence in and that actual level of responsibility of the government apparatus. The introduction of ICTs has essentially meant that politicians are instantly accessible and thus must be, at least in theory, ready to be held accountable at any time.

The third type of initiative is that which promotes new spaces for political discussion. Hungary’s e-democracy initiatives, as uncovered by this survey, show a strong tendency toward the provision of these spaces. There are three types of forums

\(^{22}\) See [http://www.siofok.hu/online_hu.php](http://www.siofok.hu/online_hu.php)

provided in Hungary and each is covered from least to most robust. The first case is an online forum where citizens can interact and discuss issues of local importance. It is becoming more and more common from municipalities of small or even medium sizes to provide these forums to their citizens. Two illustrative examples of this practice can be found in the Komló and Hajduszoboszlo municipalities. Both are mostly rural municipalities with between 22,000 and 27,000 residents. The projects of the second type of case provide a forum that is monitored by members of the local government who either cull ideas from the discussion or participate and answer questions from time to time. The latter also relies on open-source technology. Two illustrative examples are those forums found in the Szentes and Zalaegerszeg municipalities. The former is a rural, industrial municipality in south-eastern Hungary whose forum is monitored by local officials. The latter is a medium-sized city, whose economy depends largely on textiles and oil, in south-western Hungary where the issues discussed in the forum are actually discussed by the city’s elected leaders during council meetings. The final case actually manages to create a dialogue between citizens and the mayor, a rare achievement as far as the cases uncovered herein are concerned. The municipal area is Óbuda-Békásmegyer, the second largest district in Budapest with roughly 127,000 citizens. The initiative provides an online live-chat forum between the mayor and citizen-users that have registered beforehand. The event takes place every third month. In this way, a real political space is created and sustained that could not have existed without ICTs. In other words, it is a real electronically mediated agora.

In the case of Hungary, we see a recent EU accession country moving out from the long shadow of communism that, despite some very sobering hurdles, is home to a great deal of local e-democracy initiatives. It is not exaggerating to say that it is becoming the norm for municipal governments to offer some type of e-democracy services to their citizens. Despite the general level of success in Hungary, there is

24 See http://www.komlo.hu/index2.php?m=28
26 See both http://www.szentesinfo.hu/mozaiik/polghiv/vendegkonyv-v/guestbook.cgi and http://www.szentesinfo.hu/mozaiik
27 See http://www.zalaegerszeg.hu/tart/forum?target=browse_forum&id=1
28 See http://www.obuda.hu/forumarch.php?athoz=20*0*1
little evidence that these advances have done much to ameliorate the problems mentioned at the beginning of this country report. While it is likely that greater transparency in the governing process will eventually come as the popularity of projects like the one in Pestszentlőrinc-Pestimre, which allows citizens to question their leaders via SMS, this sort of practice is far from the norm. In fact, the presence of many local online discussion forums, by far the most common, actually does little to improve the decay in the institutionalization of democratic norms. In addition, the question of the digital divide is not really being addressed, excepting the examples of building websites for sight-disabled individuals and the public provision of WiFi hotspots. Of course, the digital divide is a difficult problem to address by providing online services. In any case, despite these obstacles, the many e-democracy initiatives in Hungary provide a shining example of the potential for governments to take advantage of the power of ICTs with little funding and in an area with less than ideal internet penetration to help improve the quality of democracy.
Italy

Italy has only recently begun to experiment with e-democracy initiatives, beginning officially only in 2003. Yet despite its relative adolescence, it has a robust collection of projects in general, and an unusually high concentration of activities oriented specifically toward deliberation. There is also a relatively high level of cooperation and coordination amongst and between the different levels of government, with specific monetary contributions by the national government to foster e-democracy at the local level. In general, despite a high degree of innovation displayed by the projects uncovered in this investigation, there is unfortunately a paucity of examples of local governments specifically using ICTs to help change and evolve the relationship they share with their citizens.

1. Context

Italy is a large, southern European country with a strong, growing economy and a high level of internet usage, especially amongst the younger generation. It is also a country with a heavily bureaucratized, multi-tiered, semi-federal government. Furthermore, the population density ranges from extremely low in the countryside to extremely high in the urban areas and everything in between. Thus, local e-democracy initiatives in Italy have myriad demographic backgrounds against which to be set.

For instance, the biggest provinces in Italy are Milan (3,705,323 inhabitants), Rome (3,704,396 inhabitants), Naples (3,060,124 inhabitants), and Torino (2,165,299 inhabitants). These are the only provinces where the population exceeds 2 million. In 14 provinces the population is less than 200,000. The least populated province is Isernia with 89,775 inhabitants. On the municipal level, Rome (2,547,677 inhabitants) is the biggest municipality in Italy followed by Milan (1,308,311). Italy’s smallest municipality is Morterone in Piedmont, with only 33 inhabitants. Thus it is clear that the demographic context of the “local” level is quite diverse and the system of governmental competencies is designed to handle this situation.

The Italian government is divided into 4 levels under the national, state government. Directly under this is the Regional government. The twenty Regions of Italy are like mini-states which enjoy a significant degree of autonomy as stated in the country’s constitution. Below this level is the Province. These subdivisions typically concern themselves with infrastructure upkeep and are, in most senses, subordinate to
the Regional government. There are 110 provinces in Italy as of this year. Below this level is the Municipal level. Municipalities are governed by a mayor and a council. This level of government enjoys a fair amount of autonomy in decision-making as well as significant financial support from higher levels of government. It is also free to have any kind of relationship with any other level of government and is not limited in entirety by its existence under the jurisdiction of its respective Province and Region. The lowest level of Italian government is the district, which is simply a subsection of the municipality. It has a heavily administrative purpose.

The Italian government organizes its electronic initiatives in a central fashion. At a national level, Italy has a special government organization called CNIPA (National Center for Public Administration and Informatics) whose role is to stimulate, support and promote ICT usage within national public bodies. CNIPA deals with both e-government and e-democracy. It also funds several projects concerning both e-government and e-democracy initiatives. Funds can be requested by each Italian local government and the funding actions have strongly improved the attention and the breadth of projects on e-government and e-democracy in Italy. At the local level, there are no explicitly defined government bodies which are directly responsible for e-government or e-democracy actions. CNIPA is the national reference and the manager for e-government and e-democracy initiatives, while at local level these functions are the responsibility of the internal ICT office. In 2005, 16.5% of Regional public administration bodies in Italy had an ICT office, which often deal also with e-democracy initiatives. On the municipal level, the best indicator is the percentage of towns and cities that have a website, which is 65.9%. In both cases, the highest concentration was found in the Regions of Emilia Romagna and Tuscany.

2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy

While the country’s e-democracy institutions are clearly in a growing stage, there are a few major obstacles that must be overcome. In Italy, as in most western democracies, the major issues facing the political community are a lack of interest and an increasingly uninformed public, at least with respect to politics and civic life. Concerning specifically e-democracy, Italy has a very large digital divide. The inequality of access to digital information is especially pronounced upon comparison between the northern and southern halves. According to the national census, the
southern regions are severely lacking in ICT penetration. So what actions is the government taking to address these shortcomings?

The government of Italy is addressing these concerns in a top-down manner. In November 2003, the national government approved 200 million Euro to help fund e-government innovations on the local level. In 2004, the Ministry for Innovation and Technology released the Guidelines for E-Democracy. This was meant to provide direction concerning the use of ICTs in order to achieve greater transparency in local governments and improve public participation. In addition, in April 2006, the CNIPA co-funded the first 57 Italian e-democracy projects at the local level. Funds provided uniquely by the CNIPA totaled 9.5 million Euros. In the end, however, the entire amount is expected to reach 41 million Euros as the local governments invest further funds themselves in those projects approved by the CNIPA.

Two are two important points worth noting based on this central response. First, the project and the money do little to effectively distinguish between e-government and e-democracy as, on the national level, they are the responsibility of the same office. Thus, the money and political will allocated to these projects often does not result in deep changes to the democracy. Second, the national approach does little to address the problem of the digital divide. Thus, unless this problem is addressed, any advances in e-democracy in Italy will go unknown by a large proportion of the population.

3. Overview of Initiatives

Despite these setbacks, there are few shining examples that demonstrate how much local e-democracy is taking hold in Italy. Furthermore, while in general the Emilia-Romagna Region is the most advanced and active in e-democracy initiatives, there are well-known projects from both northern and southern regions and even examples of cooperation between them. In order to portray the major trends within Italy, therefore, it is easiest to divide the field of examples into those projects that were self-funded and those that relied upon government sponsorship from higher levels.

The most significant and active projects at the moment are those who started in a bottom-up fashion beginning at the local administrations (such as the Argenta Municipality) or by citizens’ voluntary work (such as the Open Polis project across all of Italy), who decided to invest their time and efforts in improving citizens
participation in decision making processes. The self-financed nature of these grassroots projects impelled a greater experimentation with and ultimately reliance upon open source technologies, in order to reduce costs and to allow a more open and collaborative development process, than most others. For instance, in comparison to these initiatives those projects which were financed under a top-down government scheme tended to be slower in development and more tied to formal chains of command rather than on a concrete executive management structure. Let us illustrate this with a few examples.

In the Argenta Municipality, a small city located in Emilia-Romagna with about 22,000 residents, a self-financed project has created a local online political space.29 Citizens can take part in a forum concerning important local events, make proposals or send petitions by means of a special form, or enter a chat room to get in touch with the local administrators. What is more, they can even vote in local referendums. Furthermore, the project incorporates the national identity based smart card (CNS). Using this technology, which is moving toward ubiquity in Italy, the website can easily authenticate its users and this has enabled them to experiment with convening the town council online. However, begun in 2004, this initiative has been well received by its users yet faces the typical problem of relatively low levels of users overall. Nonetheless, a local online political space was successfully launched based largely on the self-financed efforts of a municipality.

In another example, the 11th District of the City of Rome has initiated a project called Municipio Partecipato.30 This project provides a platform on which citizens can make their opinions about the city’s budget heard. The website itself offers a forum area, mailing lists and a survey area to collect citizens’ feelings and opinions as well as to encourage greater participation. The government then uses this collection of citizen responses in order to help make changes in how the budget is drawn up and allocated. The website not only receives input from individual citizens but often, citizen groups form to advocate via this online process in a more organized manner. There was relatively little startup cost for this project and thus the initiative has been entirely self-financed and self-controlled. The project generally does not suffer from under-participation although based on survey results, some users are critical of the

29 www.comune.argenta.fe.it
30 www.municipiopartecipato.it
program, claiming that it does not really give them any more say in the political process that affects them.

While these two examples serve to highlight the efficacy of those projects that were entirely autonomous in initiation and financing, there is a wealth of programs that have begun with the support of more central levels of government. For example, the Demos.ct project in Catania, Sicily is a service offered by the municipal government, in conjunction with the Innovations and Technologies Ministry, which allows citizens to participate in local politics online. Specifically the project has two purposes. The first is to make available online the main issues that are on the municipal agenda and collect impressions and opinions from all citizens before the town council convenes. This is done through forums where citizens are invited to express their opinion which are then considered and analyzed during the town council. Second, the website allows disabled and disadvantaged people to get in touch and improve communication with the municipality from the comfort of their homes. This project too, suffers from a lack of participation given its general youth. However, unlike other projects, it specifically addresses the problem of inclusion since, while it requires its users to have a computer to take part, it extends the possibility for participation in the political community to those who are disabled or housebound.

These three examples serve to demonstrate two different points. First, Italy’s e-democracy initiatives are at a young stage but, with many initiatives on the local levels and a new program that provides central government funding for these local projects, this situation is changing rapidly. This is shown by the high profile of some of these cases. For instance, two projects not covered in detail here (their scope is more than local) have received much attention recently. The Partecipa Project\textsuperscript{31} in Emilia Romagna and the OpenPolis\textsuperscript{32} across the whole country are increasingly popular websites. Thus e-democracy is clearly an increasingly common practice. Second, the issue of the digital divide is apparent based on the lack of ICT penetration in southern and rural areas. Nonetheless, it must be noted that, while in general northern regions are more advanced than southern regions, both Sicily (Catania) and Sardinia\textsuperscript{33} have well-known and relatively well-developed projects although they are

\textsuperscript{31} \url{www.partecipa.net}
\textsuperscript{32} \url{www.openpolis.it}
\textsuperscript{33} \url{http://www.comunas.it/}
arguably less-robust in terms of their democratic impact. This brings into question the severity of the digital divide question as these areas demonstrate strong e-democracy platforms yet are characterized by low levels of ICT penetration in general.
Spain

In the nearly thirty years that have elapsed since the passing of the Spanish Constitution and the arrival of democracy, Spain has quickly become subject to the same problems facing most western democracies: a lack of participation and an increasing degree of skepticism concerning political leaders. In short, there is much disillusionment with the various levels of Spanish government. As part of the many efforts to counter this negative trend, all levels of Spanish government are beginning to participate in some way in the sponsorship of e-democracy initiatives. Moreover, most of these initiatives are focused on the local level. While scarcely any of these initiatives are more than 4 years old, there have been some widespread and very successful projects that have revolutionized the way Spaniards can participate in their local governments.

1. Context

Spain is a large, southern European country that has seen drastic economic improvement over the last three decades. Nonetheless, this new wealth is far from equally distributed. Its population, as well, lives predominately in either very concentrated, urban areas or in dispersed, very rural areas. Furthermore, in many ways, Spain is a state made up of many mini-states with rich yet diverse linguistic, social, and historical legacies. This is the background against which e-democracy in Spain exists, and often the fragmented national sentiment, and accompanying critical attitude toward national politics, means that local politics are a fertile ground for initiatives in this field.

The government of Spain is a Parliamentary Monarchy that is organized in a federal structure. This hierarchy is very loosely held together by the central, federal government; there is a large degree of regional autonomy. There are 17 of these regions, known as CCAA (comunidades autónomas) in Spanish, meaning autonomous communities (also referred to as a region). Within the 17 CCAA, there are 50 Provinces which themselves consist of 8,109 municipalities. In terms of population distribution, 33% of the total population (representing 7770 municipalities) lives in cities smaller than 20,000 inhabitants. Another 33.5% of the population lives in the six cities that have populations of over 500,000. The types of e-democracy initiative are influence by their context in the Spanish case very much.
When discussing public policy initiatives, it is important to have an adequate understanding of the capacity for the government body to act. There are two finance schemes in Spain. The first, the “Regimen Foral” applies to the Regions with special status such as the Basque Country and Navarra. The more common system is called “Regimen Común” and applies to all other Regions. Within this system, there are three levels of tax. The first, known as “exclusive regional tax,” is an asset tax levied by the Regions as they see fit. The second, “shared taxes,” are taxes on items such as alcohol and tobacco and are distributed between the central and regional governments. The third, “Fondo de Suficiencia,” is a system to cover the difference between the income and the need of each CCAA; typically this program ensures the smooth administration of social programs such as healthcare. On the municipal level, governments have the potential to raise taxes but their capacity is typically quite limited by the legal code. On the national level, total expenditure is equal to 20% of GDP. This level varies drastically from Region to Region. Now we show what this system of public expenditure means for the implementation of e-democracy programs.

Despite the presence national subsidies for projects relating to e-democracy, there is no unit within the national public administration that is in charge of overseeing these projects. In fact, it is not unusual for most of the support for local e-democracy projects to come from other sources or a collaboration of government and non-government entities. This will be discussed further shortly. At the regional level, and of course depending on the region, there are some departments within the administration in charge of electronic initiatives. The same is true for the municipal level.

With this economic and political background, we now discuss in more detail the place of e-democracy in Spanish society.

2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy

E-democracy in Spain, from the perspective of the various public administrative bodies at least, is a direct response to the two major problems that plague the Spanish democracy as well as most western democracies in this age. The two primary challenges to democracy in Spain are a decreasing confidence in political parties and decreasing levels of participation in elections. In response to these problems, public administrators see the promise of e-democracy for ameliorating this undesirable situation as manifesting itself in two distinct ways. First, e-democracy tools can be
used in compliment to traditional tools of democracy to make them more available and user-friendly in the digital age. Second, they can be used as a way to foster greater participation in government decision-making processes by opening them up in ways impossible only a few years ago. By making the democratic process easier to participate in and the governing process more transparent and open to citizen involvement, public administrators in Spain hope to harness the power of e-democracy to address the problems facing their political society. Again, it is important to understand what this means on different levels of government.

In fact, each level addresses the question of implementation in different ways. The national government, given the very decentralized nature of Spanish federalism, tends to promote projects on the local level by providing funding. Furthermore, the national level tends to favor projects that attempt to realize e-voting in local elections. The Regional level governments tend to support those initiatives that allow for greater citizen participation in parliamentary activities. They do not exclusively promote participation in legislative activities as there are a few examples of Regional governments providing funding and support for other initiatives that allow citizens the option of participating in an online political community. On the local level, where most of the activity lies and most of the initiatives are carried out, there are two general types of e-democracy project. The first is the provision of an online political platform that serves as a place of debate and opinion formation, not to mention as a forum for direct proposal of new policies by citizens. The second type of e-democracy initiative is one that allows citizens the option of participating in a government activity, such as helping draft a budget.

3. Overview of Initiatives

While Spain has seen a general abundance of e-democracy initiatives, many have met with little support either from government administrators or from citizens or both. Therefore, in an attempt to provide an adequate description of the status quo in Spain, we present cases based on the type of sponsorship they received (primarily

34 Take, for examples, Andalucia (Open Parliament), Democraciaweb in Catalonia, Basque Country (Zabalik)

35 This has been the case for the Regional governments of Castilla y León as well as Castilla La Mancha. See, for reference in this report, the case study on Ciudadanos2010.net.

36 See, for example, the Madrid Participa project.
central, regional or local). From the central level, mostly e-voting initiatives were supported and financed. In the end, none of these projects met with much success. On the Regional level, most of the activity consists of funding projects on the local level. However, we discuss those projects that do take place on the regional and which largely focus on opening up the governing process using ICTs. On the local level, we distinguish between two types of cases: ones that provide online democratic platforms as novel space for democracy and ones that work in compliment to the traditional democratic process.

In general, national-level sponsorship of local e-democracy projects focused on e-voting projects. Furthermore, most of these projects received little attention from the publics toward which they were oriented. Pilot projects have been run in the municipalities of Pol, Lugo, Zamora, and El Hoyo de Pinares. There was also an attempt, in multiple municipalities to run an online vote concerning the European Constitution but which was held in the weeks before the actual referendum. None of these projects were very successful in that there were low levels of participation and what is more, none of them were binding. In addition, the online referendum concerning the European Constitution was heavily criticized by the media as well as many politicians. Given the narrow focus of the central government on e-voting almost exclusively, little success was evident.

Perhaps more fruitful were the efforts of the regional governments. There are two categories of regional initiative. First are those that take place on the regional level entirely; second are those that are local projects funded by the Regional government. This investigation focused on three projects of the first type. The first is the Open Parliament of Andalucia.37 This website allows the residents of Andalucia to occasionally participate in an online consultation process that allows the parliament better insight into the desires and expectations of its constituency. The second example is from the Basque Parliament website.38 This website allows the largely independent Region’s populace to participate in online discussion forums hosted by the parliament as well as receive an e-newsletter describing parliamentary agendas and activities. The third initiative is run by the government of Catalonia.39 The

37 See http://www.parlamentodeandalucia.es/webdinamica/portal-web-parlamento/actividadparlamentaria/parlamentoa abierto.do
38 See http://parlamento.euskadi.net/c_zabaseleki.html
39 See http://www.democraciaweb.org/
Initiative, known as Democràcia.web, is a two-part project which is funded not only by the government of Catalonia, but also by the Fundació Jaume Bofill\(^{40}\) and the Open Parliament Project (Parlament Obert),\(^ {41}\) and thus is not just a government-run program. The first goal of this project is to disseminate information about e-democracy. Thus the website offers links to research and government related material. The second objective, and the main one according to the project, is to allow citizens to give feedback to parliamentarians as well as participate in forums hosted by the government. Significantly, the project even allows, at certain, specified times, citizens to propose amendments to bills under legislative consideration. Since the second category of Regional initiatives actually take place at the municipal level, we now shift to this most local level.

The municipal level is considered in two parts, based on the type of initiative. The first type consists of those initiatives which simply use ICTs to compliment the pre-existing democratic process. Examples of such initiatives are those that are mostly in their primary stages thus far. For instance, the Consensus\(^ {42}\) project is a national initiative at the local level to attract citizen input into the governing process through use of ICTs. However, in many instances, the project has not proceeded very far. In other words, there are many municipalities that have done little more than provide a website for their city government. There is very little interaction in these instances and this sort of local e-democracy represents more of a transparency campaign than anything else.

The second group of e-democracy projects consists of those which propose new ways for citizens to participate in the democratic process that rely on the medium of communication technology. In Spain there are many ambitions projects that fit this category. To give an illustration, it is necessary to describe the three most successful ones uncovered by this survey.\(^ {43}\) The first is called Ciudadanos2010.net. The scope of this project is the municipal level of whichever community uses it. It is used in over one hundred municipalities in Spain at this time. The project is an attempt to recreate online the idea of the Greek Agora as a place to promote political discussion and debate. The most widely discussed ideas on these online forums can be brought in

\(^{40}\) [http://www.fbofill.org/](http://www.fbofill.org/)

\(^{41}\) [http://www.uoc.es/parlamentobert/](http://www.uoc.es/parlamentobert/)

\(^{42}\) [http://www.e-consensus.org/consensus](http://www.e-consensus.org/consensus)

\(^{43}\) See the three Spanish Case Studies in the Annex.
front of the municipal government for actual consideration. This umbrella project has received both state aid, from various levels, and private funding (from the Europa Press) and is the most widely known e-democracy initiative in Spain. Most importantly, in terms of the typology identified in this report, it is both a participatory and a deliberative project, one of the few initiatives that straddles the two categories, since it attempts not only to improve the consultation of the constituency but also attempts to foster extended debate and discussion of local issues online.

The second example is known as Madrid Participa. The Madrid municipal government promoted a consultation exercise in the central district (one of various districts) which focused on gathering citizens’ opinions about how to improve quality of life in the city. Although there had been previous experiments, Madrid Participa was on a much bigger scale (a potential population of 136,227 people) and with a number of participating channels – Internet, Java, mobile phones, SMS messages and on-site centers. Participants were asked questions relating to public infrastructure and priorities to improve quality of life in the city’s center. This project too had a significant external funding (Oracle, Telefonica, HP, and Intel) as well as state aid from multiple levels. This project falls exclusively in the category of participation since it allows citizens to give input into government policy-making but does not foster any kind of extended discussion. Furthermore, the scope is exceptional in that it provided multiple technological channels of participation. Unfortunately, this project received very little participation, demonstrating the difficulty of overcoming the embedded critical attitude toward the Spanish government.

The final project is the creation of a Pueblo Digital (digital town) in the municipality of Jun. In the beginning, the aim was to connect citizens and government by PC. By the end, the project began to incorporate mobile phone technology (almost all citizens have mobile phones) to connect citizens and the government to resolve administrative procedures. The Digital Village is not only a specific initiative but also a global project which includes e-administration (developing procedures on-line) as well as e-democracy (electronic voting, consultations, etc). This project, too, falls into the participation category of the typology used in this report. As well, the Pueblo Digital relies on funding from both state and private sources (Global City Dialogues). For a city with a population of 2,161, it has a very high rate of participation.
On the whole, the most robust examples of e-democracy appeared on the very local level and relied on funding that did not exclusively originate from within the Spanish government. The various e-democracy initiatives surveyed were almost exclusively participatory in nature, most of them finding very innovative ways including the use of cell phones, to consult a constituency that, before the digital age, remained largely outside of the political decision-making process. Despite hosting some of the most innovative projects uncovered by this report, Spain faces some significant challenges. The two problems mentioned at the start, lack of trust and low participation, combine to yield sometimes-dismal results in terms of the rates of participation of these projects. However, the pure abundances of initiatives, especially under the Ciudadanos2010 banner give hope that, despite initial skepticism, Spaniards may slowly take advantage of these new modes of political participation to overcome their hesitancy to trust the Spanish Government.
Switzerland

For the only country with widespread, binding e-voting, Switzerland’s spectrum of e-democracy initiatives has a surprisingly narrow focus. With the overwhelming majority of cases uncovered by this survey falling into the participation category, Switzerland lacks any examples of governments using the internet to open up new spaces for deliberation. This is most likely because the biggest problem facing Swiss democracy today is a lack of participation. In that sense, it is not surprising that the majority of initiatives uncovered were e-voting programs at the very local level. In short, it seems that except for administrative simplifications, no real efforts are under way at the communal level to electronically extend democratic opportunities offered to citizens.

1. Context

In terms of demography, the cantons and communes are very unequally distributed. By far biggest city in Switzerland is Zürich, with about 350,000 inhabitants. The smallest communes in the countryside have about 20 inhabitants. The median commune has about 2,500 inhabitants. The total number of communes is about 2,770 (year 2006). The biggest canton in terms of population is Zurich, with a population of 1.25 million. The smallest canton is Appenzell Innerrhoden with a population of 15,000.

The government of the Swiss Confederation is federal and decentralized. For the federal and cantonal levels, the subsidiarity principle applies, meaning that the federal state is in power of only those matters that are expressly given to it by the cantons; all other issues remain in the competence of the cantons. Communes, on the other hand, are secondary public authorities, in the sense that their competencies are defined by cantonal regulations. There are large variations between cantons with regard to communal arrangements. In general, the level of local autonomy is high from an international perspective. However, there exist large variations among the cantons with respect to the distribution of competencies between the cantons and the communes. Generally speaking, the German-speaking communes offer a greater autonomy to their communes, while the French- and Italian-speaking cantons sometimes restrict the communal autonomy quite substantially. Despite the heavy distribution of competencies to the cantons, the tax raising power of each level of government is equally distributed (1/3 of tax money raised goes to each level), while
the discretionary spending is medium to high in the German-speaking communes and medium to low in the Latin communes.

It is important to take a moment to highlight a unique feature of the Swiss Federal system. Many of the employees, in fact most of the employees, of Swiss government institutions, whether elected or bureaucratic, are not paid on a full-time basis. In fact, even members of the national level parliament are only part-time employees. In many communes and cities, the administrative staff has a few full-time paid positions, such as Mayor and chiefs of departments. It is striking to note that the overall degree of professionalization of politics is much higher in the French and Italian speaking cantons than in the German speaking ones. This is an important point as most the e-democracy initiatives uncovered by this report were tools to make government run more easily concerning its interaction with citizens. ‘Automation of interaction’ is probably the best phrase to describe the purpose of e-democracy in Switzerland.

At the national level there is no single administrative department responsible for e-democracy. In general, these issues are presently dealt with in diverse administrative units. Although there is an e-government task force at the federal level, it is composed of different departments. E-voting, for instance, is dealt with by the Federal Chancellery, in the Political Rights division. Also at the federal level, within the Federal Office of Communications there is a unit dealing with the Information Society. At the Cantonal level, however, e-voting is dealt with in different and through different departments.

2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy

Given that there is little focused attention paid at the national level to the promotion of e-democracy, it is unsurprising that there is little real dialogue about e-democracy strategies. Where discussion has been raised it concerns increasing participation, as one of the principal justifications for implementing e-voting solutions. This makes sense given that the biggest problem facing Swiss democracy is the lack of participation due to the general inundation of voting opportunities. This also helps garner greater participation amongst the youth, who display the lowest levels of participation. Besides the e-democracy initiatives that will be explicated further below, there are a few programs that aim to augment civic participation. One is a system of civic education classes implemented in schools as well as through
3. Overview of Initiatives

Given the heavy focus on initiatives that encourage greater participation, it makes sense to search elsewhere for trends. However, there is no real regional trend to speak of, given that projects take place on the canton as well as communal levels. Furthermore, there is little funding variation since budgets are not highly differentiated given the rigid tax distribution system. The only trend, therefore, in Switzerland, is the existence of a heavy focus on fostering participation as a response to both tight budgets and thus the need for lowering transaction costs as well as the perceived lack of participation in Swiss politics. We now cover a few examples to illustrate the existence of e-democracy in Switzerland.

The first case we cover is the only non-participation oriented case in the country. In fact, this is an example of web portal designed to enhance information transparency. In the Canton of Geneva, with roughly 440,000 residents, the government decided to launch a common entry point for the Geneva government. The purpose of the website is to make it easier to find financial information about the cantonal government as well as the commune governments. This was a very successful initiative and it now contains data going back over ten years. Nonetheless, this single example of a transparency-enhancing project is far overwhelmed by those projects whose intention is to offer new ways of civic participation.

The projects devoted to participation fall into two distinct categories. The first is one of citizen consultation; the second is e-voting. We begin with citizen consultation. The first example we use to illustrate this practice is from the canton of Neuchâtel, with a population of about 170,000 residents. In 2001, the cantonal government introduced a web portal to the canton’s entire government and all of the

---

44 http://www.epower-initiative.ch/
45 See the Geneva web portal at: http://www.geneve-communes.ch/
46 See the website at: http://www.ne.ch/nejat/site/jsp/rubrique/rubrique.jsp?StyleType=marron&DocId=13282
services it offered. What sets this website apart from the previous example is the introduction of e-voting in 2005. The project was entirely self-funded. The second example is from the canton of Vaud, with a population of about 650,000 residents. The cantonal government introduced a broad, consultative website\(^\text{47}\) in order to gather input from citizens. The website was specifically targeted at two governmental initiatives in mid 2005 that related to the new constitution of the canton. The project was self-financed and self-administered. Both these cases are examples of cantons using ICTs to promote new types of participation in the government process. As much of the political power rests with the cantonal governments, it is unsurprising that we find a trend toward simplifying participation at a time of low voter turnout.

The second type of participation oriented projects however, is clearly aimed at reversing this trend. There have been three examples of e-voting in Switzerland since 2003. All three of them received some funding and heavy support from the federal government. Furthermore, they were more or less inter-related as each subsequent project learned from the previous. Additionally, each e-voting example was not only limited to online voting but included a platform for voting by SMS. The first project initiated was in Anières, Geneva in 2003,\(^\text{48}\) at the behest of federal authorities who treated this as a first test of e-voting. The second e-vote took place in the Canton of Zurich in 2005.\(^\text{49}\) This project was also carried out in conjunction with a private company called Unisys Switzerland who gave technological support. The final e-vote took place as a specific instance of the Canton of Zurich e-voting scheme. This last case involved an internet platform that functioned as a political space for the election. It included\(^\text{50}\) candidate profiles, a media center, an information center, a political agenda, a discussion forum, and an e-voting platform. While this project skirts the border of the deliberation category, it is really an all-purpose portal under the auspices of the e-voting project. Between the examples of e-voting and e-consultation, it is apparent that the e-democracy initiatives in Switzerland are heavily loaded into the participation category.

E-democracy in Switzerland is clearly focused on encouraging higher levels of participation. It is striking to note that this is the only sort of e-democracy that has

---

\(^{47}\) See the Vaud e-Consultation website at: [http://www.dinf.vd.ch/decter/index.html](http://www.dinf.vd.ch/decter/index.html)

\(^{48}\) See [http://www.geneve.ch/evoting/](http://www.geneve.ch/evoting/)


\(^{50}\) See [http://edc-platform.ch/bulach/index.php](http://edc-platform.ch/bulach/index.php)
received support from the federal government as well. In general, local initiatives are cantonal attempts to create greater information provision or create a new way for citizens to give their feedback in a country where citizens are regularly bombarded with likewise opportunities through constant polling and frequent voting. Perhaps this paucity of e-democracy examples, excluding participatory ones, is due to a lack of federal interest. It must be noted that this may change with the passing of legislation that is under consideration to create a national e-government program. However for the time being it remains that, already enjoying a high level of involvement in public affairs, there is little incentive for the initiation of many e-democracy programs. In spite of this, there is no denying that Switzerland is leading the way in experimenting with e-voting.
United Kingdom

With an internet penetration rate of 62.9% or 37.8 million residents,\textsuperscript{51} the UK accounts for about 4% of the world’s Internet users while having only .9% of the world’s population. Furthermore, with the advantage of a unitary government, it also has show itself to be highly innovative in realizing the potential of e-democracy tools. There are really no outstanding trends in terms of the typology used in this report; the examples found in the UK are well distributed amongst all three. As a major, longstanding western democracy, the UK faces many of the same challenges as others in that group. For instance, the population has low levels of trust in the government and the youth are generally uninterested in politics. However, in addition to this, it has a small population and a high level of immigration. Thus, one very serious problem facing British democracy is the problem of pluralism. With large immigrant communities often becoming fragmented, social cohesion and inclusion is on the top of the agenda. As such, one would expect a higher level of deliberative forums provided by governments in order to foster political discussion to bridge these gaps. While there are certainly some attempts at this, none have achieved a high level of success. Let us now take a look at the British case in order to see how e-democracy initiatives are pursued.

1. Context

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy. The government is fundamentally unitary, although it has been argued that the country is experiencing a move toward federalism given the various devolutions of power in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Given the strengthening of regional identities and the high levels of immigration, implementation of e-democracy initiatives is not so straightforward as being centrally implemented and locally administered. On the contrary, while there are some examples of centrally-organized e-democracy projects, most are run autonomously on the local level. We now move on to explore the demography of Britain more fully.

It is difficult to describe local demographics in Britain because city governments vary in shape, form, and size across this small island nation so drastically. Municipalities with unitary authority, as in ones that are not part of a larger

\textsuperscript{51} Internet World Stats: http://www.internetworldstats.com/eu/uk.htm.
conturbation, can range from as small as a few thousand to many million. The largest municipality in the UK is London, its capital, with a population of 7.5 million\(^{52}\) within the city’s boundaries. The problem with this kind of measurement is that the population of the most cities is usually much larger than those who live within the city’s borders. However, policy making happens along these limits. While this problem exists in all the countries surveyed, it is particularly severe in the UK, where cities are often divided into districts, wards, and parishes in inconsistent fashion. In short, there are is a multitude of examples of the meaning of the idea of local, and this, for the sake of this report, provides fertile ground for taking many different contexts for e-democracy initiatives.

Local governments in the UK have comparatively low levels of competence, given the unitary state. However, there are four different systems of local government (England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland) and so we will do our best to give a broad picture. Moving down a level of government, the UK is divided into another level, which can be governed by one of two different systems. The older, two-tiered system is divided into County Councils and District Councils. The former are charged with education, social services, and infrastructure. The latter are given the responsibility of administering the council housing and building permits. In the second system, a Unitary Authority assumes both responsibilities. These are used mostly in the devolved territories as well as some areas of England. Below this level, municipalities can be divided into Parishes, known as local councils, but their role is unimportant for the present inquiry. London, it should be noted, is administered on a different basis entirely. Here, the city is divided into administrative boroughs who have a joint Council and which is under the administrative leadership of the Mayor of the Greater London Authority. Overall, at all these levels, the relative amount of expenditure is fairly small.

Most of the money that funds the e-democracy initiatives in question here comes allocated from the central government specifically for this purpose or from private funding. In addition, these municipal authorities have to right to levy some types of tax, including taxes on real estate, but the revenue such endeavors is usually quite limited. Money for these initiatives tends to come from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), when it comes from the central government. There are also,

\(^{52}\) www.nomisweb.co.uk
depending on the local authority, divisions of the council governments that are specifically in charge of e-government or e-democracy projects. Again, this largely depends on the council. Since there are so many variables at play in the UK case, let us discuss now the general nature of the British democracy so as to provide the socio-political context for the discussion of examples.

2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy

Britain, as any major western democracy that has a long history, suffers from a lack of trust in government authorities and a lack of interest among the youth, not to mention waning levels of participation amongst the general population. Furthermore, there is a growing sense of urgency concerning the growing immigrant population. The problem in such a small country is that immigrant groups often end up settling in the same area and become fragmented from the rest of the society. This is also related to the struggle against terrorism and what is becoming an increasingly organized Islamic society inside the boundaries of the UK. The final issue that dominates British democracy is the question of devolution and how it should be handled. It is quite clear that the government is slowly changing in structure, and the effects of this paradigm shift provide the impetus for major policy change in the UK. On the whole, the current problems in Britain are not unlike those of many Western democracies.

On the local level, many of the same problems persist. Related to the first problem above, many local governments struggle for ways to increase voter turnout and interest amongst the youth. Civic education campaigns are the main tool used by local authorities here. The bigger problem relates to the question of immigration. Since it is on the municipal level that most of the effects of immigration are felt, much of the policies unfold in this domain. It is difficult to promote a common dialogue in large cities like London and Birmingham when there are such large sectors of the population that relate better to themselves than to the rest of the UK. Also, the low incomes of most immigrant communities make Council Estates a top priority. However, the danger is that this might serve to fragment the communities even more. In short, it is not too much to say the question of integration among an increasingly pluralistic population is at the top of the agenda of many local authorities in the UK.

In this context, e-democracy is understood as a means to promote greater participation and greater unification of the population. By opening up new spaces of political discourse using the Internet, it may be possible to ameliorate some of the
worst externalities of the influx of foreigners. In a more traditional sense, e-
democracy is also understood as a way of opening up participation in the political
process to those who feel like it typically takes place behind closed doors. With that
said, we turn now to an investigation of the major trends, supplemented by examples,
of e-democracy initiatives in Britain.

3. Overview of Initiatives

E-democracy in the UK came in all three categories used by this report. If
there is a trend, it is that e-democracy initiatives tended to take place in larger cities
and fall slightly more in the participation category than the others. By far the most
developed and well-funded programs were in this category. Thus, we proceed in this
section to offer illustrative examples of initiatives that aim to increase transparency,
open new spaces for deliberation, and foster greater and new means of participation,
in that order.

In this category we take two examples with different backgrounds. The first is
from Devon, a large municipality of over 720,000 people. The second is from a small
district in the county of Durham, with an electorate of only 4,800 people. In the
county of Devon, the County Council decided to initiate a webcasting service\(^{53}\) to
bring the government’s activities closer to the people in November, 2003. The
webcasting service provides viewers with access to live or archived broadcasts
(pictures and audio) of meetings, events and debates with additional information such
as agendas, reports and biographical details of speakers. In the county of Durham,
Liberal Democrat Councillor Paul Leake kept a blog of his political thoughts and
activities:\(^{54}\) He also used it to gain support and solicit feedback on various projects.
In the end, his refusal to remove controversial content from his blog forced him to
step down from his party.\(^{55}\) In that sense, this blog was a very controversial initiative,
drawing attention to its parent organization, ReadMyDay.co.uk and making the
political blog a commonly know tool of representatives. The e-democracy initiatives
that aimed to increase governmental transparency in UK are varied and have different

\(^{53}\) www.devon.gov.uk

\(^{54}\) http://www.paulleake.org.uk/ (This website is no longer active, but other blogs can be found at
http://www.readmyday.co.uk/)

\(^{55}\) See review at:
purposes. The first one here is an attempt to counter the lack of trust in the
government, as well as the lack of interest, by putting videos online. The second is an
attempt to foster political support by making the day-to-day activities of councilor
more open to the public, who might otherwise be largely unaware of the topics about
which councilors make decisions.

Those e-democracy initiatives in the UK that were aimed at deliberation can be
represented by two illustrative examples. Both of the examples are from medium
sized cities and both provide forums where citizens, members of the public sector, and
members of various private organizations can have full discussions over long periods
of time. The first is in the city of Bristol, a city of almost 400,000. The second is in
the city of Wolverhampton, a city of about 235,000. In the city of Bristol, in
association with the National Project for Local e-Democracy as well as the Royal
Borough of Kingston upon Thames, a project called e-petitioner was initiated that
allows citizens who wish to mobilize support for a project to reach a wider support
base than they otherwise would without the use of ICTs. When a citizen initiates a
petition, it is circulated amongst the users and discussed and debated. Users sign the
petition by putting their email address on it as a form of digital endorsement. The
councilors of the city are encouraged to provide feedback to the more popular
petitions. In the city of Wolverhampton, with help and funding from the National
Project for Local e-Democracy (through the ODPM), launched a website as part of
its “Local Strategic Partnership.” The Wolverhampton partnership website brings
together organizations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors
across Wolverhampton and provides the overall framework within which they work
together. The website features an e-panel which citizens must register to join. This
allows citizens to take part in various consultation tools including online surveys,
polls and moderated discussion forums. It is hoped that it will develop into an online
community. The website also features a consultation directory. There is also a
separate staff website to allow collaboration and information sharing. We must note
at this point the involvement of the National Project for Local e-Democracy and its
role in providing funding and support for these projects. Unfortunately, neither of
these projects focuses directly on addressing the situation of fragmentation of political

56 See the project website at: www.bristol-city.gov.uk/epetitions
57 See the websites at: www.wton-partnership.org.uk and http://partners.wton-partnership.org.uk
community. While it is important to open up new spaces for political participation, in the context of British democracy, these initiatives do not really address the critical issues at hand.

The final type of project is that which attempts to foster greater civic participation. We will illustrate this type of initiative with four examples, all of which fall under the general umbrella of citizen consultation yet each works in a unique way. What is most significant is that each has different funding sources. The first project is Swindon Micro Democracy.58 Swindon is a city with roughly 180,000 residents. In this large city, the Micro Democracy project focuses on being able to simply and cheaply engage with very small, possibly tiny communities, or micro communities, so that the people engaged can see that their voice will be heard. This project received initial funding from the ODPM through the Local e-Democracy Project but is now self-sustaining. The second example is called HearFromYourMP.com.59 The scope of this project is all 646 Parliamentary Constituencies in the UK. In the first six months of its existence, this service, which allows citizens a chance to communicate directly online with their MPs about local issues, had attracted over 17,000 constituent users and 49 MPs. This issue falls short of deliberation because the conversations are really more like question and answer sessions. This project too received funding from the ODPM. The third project takes place in Norfolk, a large city of 800,000, and is called “Your Norfolk, Your Say.”60 The function of this website is to bring together all of the citizen consultations that are happening in Norfolk together so that when residents want to have their say on local issues they can just go to one place to find a place for their voice. There are forms that they can fill in online. It’s a bit like a database so what people can do is find consultations that they are interested in. This project received funding through the Norfolk Connect Partnership and the County Strategic Partnership, government groups that seek to pool resources to lower costs.

The final illustrative project is called the BBC Action Network.61 The Action Network is a tool that helps citizens with concerns about local issues network with each other where they otherwise might not be aware of those sympathetic to their

59 For a full report, please see the case study in Annex I.
60 See project website at: www.YourNorfolkYourSay.org
61 http://www.bbc.co.uk/actionnetwork/
causes and also acts as a platform from which to launch political action. Municipal government officials such as city councilors can also access this political space to foster new ideas. The money comes from the BBC. Each of these e-democracy initiatives has different scope and a different goal. Each of them, however, manages to use ICTs to help citizens become more involved in politics. The first three generally represent forms of citizen e-consultation as they provide forms for citizens to fill out to give feedback to their government. The last one provides a tool for launching traditional political action in that it can help create a database of like-minded individuals who can begin to network for change. There is also a trend in terms of funding. The first two initiatives had heavy support from the central government’s office in charge of local e-democracy. The third initiative had help from a consortium of governments in cooperation with each other. Only the last project was privately financed. It is clear at this point that the central promotion of e-democracy has been part of the impetus for a large portion of local initiatives.

One of the most notable trends in the UK is the high level of central government assistance across different categories of e-democracy initiative. The ODPM is an important impetus behind many of these e-democracy initiatives. Also, despite the threats to the UK democracy from a ballooning pluralism, it is significant to note that little is being done to address this through e-democracy. Rather, the main trend in the UK is the provision of e-democracy services that allow citizens a greater chance to participate or to participate in new and easier ways. While this may go a long way in addressing the problem of a high level of cynicism about the government and the low levels of youth interest, there is a conspicuously narrow focus in the UK. Despite this, it is only fair to point out the fact that the UK has some very innovative initiatives. For instance, it has the only example of online platforms that allow for networking of citizens with common concerns which also allows them to initiate petitions and political action entirely online.
United States

With around 60% of its population online and accounting for 19% of all Internet traffic with only around 4% of the world’s population, the United States is online and plugged in.\(^{62}\) It would follow therefore, that with such a potential user base, there would be a wide variety of innovative e-democracy initiatives. As it turns out, with the exception of a few examples, the e-democracy projects in the US uncovered by this project fall heavily into the category of transparency enhancing. On the one hand, this is a surprise since, with such an overwhelming community of internet users, there is plenty of incentive for governments to provide new means of participation. However, it may be an indicator of the American political culture that most of the e-democracy projects allow ordinary citizens with a PC to monitor the activities of their government from their living rooms. In other words, Americans may have a greater desire for oversight of politicians rather than direct input into their decision-making.

On the other hand, while there may be little in the way of innovation in government-provided e-democracy programs, there is reason to believe that political parties may a future source of experimentation in this area. This is largely because the three major problems that face America’s democracy today are, as is typical of well-developed, Western democracies: low voter turnout, low perceived levels of accountability of political representatives, and a lack of enthusiasm among the youth population. For this reason, it is not surprising that governments do not provide novel ways of participating in the political decision-making process; it is very likely that not many people will participate. However, it is evident that there is great interest in American politics around election time and so the parties are beginning to experiment with new ways of getting people, especially the tech-savvy youth, involved in their campaigns.

1. Context

The US is a democratic republic governed by a system of constitutional federalism. There are three levels of government: Federal, State, and Municipal, with each being under the jurisdiction of its former. For the purposes of this report, the “county” government will be excluded as its general importance is waning. Also for the purposes of this report, both the State and Municipal levels are treated as local.

\(^{62}\) Some statistics thanks to: [http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats2.htm#north](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats2.htm#north)
On the Federal level, there is a bicameral Congress and a chief administrator, the President. On the State level, this system is reproduced exactly. On the municipal level, there are two different types of political system. The first is known as a city, and is essentially the same as the previous systems. The head of state is known as a mayor and the legislature the ‘city council.’ The second type of municipal government is known as a town. In this system, the administrative role is played by a small council, known typically as a board of selectmen. The legislative function is carried out by a system of popular sovereignty known as a “town meeting” or assembly. In general, cities are markedly larger in population than towns.

The population of the US is largely concentrated into urban areas and their metropolitan surroundings as well as suburbs, or satellite cities. In other words, the average American lives in or very nearby a city. As such, the city, as a unit of local government, is valuable unit of analysis in the US. Furthermore, municipal governments have a moderate degree of political control, having an incorporated existence and their own tax schemes based on property and real estate tax, not to mention business taxes. To simplify the US tax code, each level has the right to tax different transactions and incomes. The Federal government serves a redistributive role, as it provides funds to both States and municipalities as the need be to compensate for unforeseen expenses and act as a safety net. In 2005, the amount of public expenditure over all levels of government totaled 30.6% of GDP, with 10.7% being spent on the local level. Thus public expenditure in the US is fairly high and, based on a principle of subsidiarity, State and municipal governments have moderately strong spending power.

On all levels of government, public servants are compensated if they work full-time. In many cases, especially in towns, political representatives often work on only a part-time basis and thus their work may be as a volunteer. On the state level, there are rarely volunteer positions; all bureaucrats and politicians work full-time and are paid. A word about political parties is in order, given their importance in e-democracy in America. Similar to the payment structure of the public sector, most local party affiliates are part-time and unpaid. Moving up the ladder in scope, on the State level, each party typically maintains a core full-time staff. This staff swells during campaign times when the number of paid positions raises, but the number of volunteer positions balloons for a short period.
This structure is important in order to provide a background to the emergence of e-democracy initiatives. On the Federal level, as often policies that are created there slowly percolate downward, there is an Office of E-Government and Information Technology, which is an office in the Federal Administration, under the control of the President. This Office is in charge of both e-government as well as e-democracy initiatives. In the Legislative Branch of the Federal Government, the Senate has a Committee on Government Affairs which is responsible for review of bills that relate to the functioning of the government apparatus and thus affects the practical side of e-government.

On the State level, most e-democracy initiatives fall under the e-government programs that run separately between the Legislative and Administrative branches. The e-democracy projects uncovered in this survey showed that Administrative websites commonly were websites dedicated to the Governor and typically offered a means of gaining information about or even interacting with, the governor. On Legislative websites, citizens typically find a means of reading about, listening to, or watching the day’s legislative activity. Occasionally, there is even cooperation between the branches; this is usually evident in the creation of a State “portal” website, or a common website that links to the various websites of all branches. The main point about how e-democracy is initiated and administered on the State level is that each State is different.

On the municipal level, the situation is slightly different. In almost all cases, there is one common website for municipality (a portal, although this is not how they typically refer to themselves). In most cases, these websites are administered by the mayor’s staff. Even so, there was no clear pattern indicating that municipal websites had more e-democracy initiatives that related to one branch or the other. Moreover, the types of e-democracy projects encountered mirrored those on the State level.

2. Attitude Toward E-Democracy

It is necessary to understand the status quo of American democracy before we can proceed to describe adequately the practices of e-democracy that exist within that context. Three major problems plague democracy in the US. First, there is increasingly low voter turnout. Second, there is a growing perception amongst the American public, especially in the wake of many high-profile scandals involving politicians over the last decade, that public officials lack accountability. Finally,
many people worry about the dismally low interest young people show in the democratic process or politics in general. That American faces a poor rate of participation, high skepticism, and disinterest amongst the youth is not unusual, we must remember. However, as the country generally prides itself on its democracy, these problems are attracting increasing attention. Let us take each in turn.

To address on the problem of low voter turnout, the responses have come from the parties. This is because it is only questionably legal to use the government apparatus to promote an incumbent’s campaign, and participation only happens at campaign time. The main activity of the political parties to increase voter turnout has been to solicit their attention through innovative forms of political advertisement and web-based mobilization. Concerning the problem of low levels of accountability, the US Congress, recently having been turned over to the Democratic majority, is debating House Resolution #6 of the 110th Congress, which is known as the “Ethics Bill”. This is a measure that is intended to cut down on the ethics scandals seen in the US government over the past few years. Finally, on the question of engaging the youth, this is really an issue that is taken up mostly by the parties. In the last Presidential election (2004) and the most recent general election (2006), both parties have used their websites and email-lists to encourage young people to vote. This constitutes e-democracy in a different form. Since in the United States, as in many representative democracies, the major role of the citizen in politics is voting, tactics like these help to encourage open political discourse amongst the younger generations by delivering politics through the medium with which they are accustomed.

This contextual background provides an important niche for e-democracy: it is a political tool that can be used to quickly gain an advantage in, and thus rapidly change the face of, electoral politics. To look at this historically, after the (short-lived) success of the Howard Dean campaign in the 2004 primaries and the subsequent importance of presidential campaign websites in the Presidential election, the campaign playing field has changed dramatically. Furthermore, after the March 2006 F.E.C. ruling that internet campaign activities are largely exempt from Campaign Finance Laws, the Internet became a tool of central importance. For instance, a Pew Internet and American Life report shows that of those that relied on the internet for political news in general, roughly half checked the candidates’ or the parties’ websites.
3. Overview of Initiatives

Since so many cases were uncovered in the US case, this section will present a brief description of the major trends uncovered. As already stated, the examples in the United States fell heavily in the category of transparency. For that reason, this section will proceed in the reverse order from the typology given: deliberation, participation, and transparency. Given the abundance of samples, at least one is given for each category and subgroups specified in order to illustrate the idea in practice.

The deliberation category accounts for 9% of the cases uncovered. There are two major types of e-democracy initiative in this group. The first type is the provision of an online forum where citizens can interact with each other concerning issues of local importance. A quintessential example of this practice is the web forum, hosted by a private group, allowing residents of New York to discuss what was to be done with the former site of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan.63 This forum is distinct from the following because it specifically is meant to bring citizens together in a way they otherwise could not. It must be noted here that, while most types of e-democracy initiative were found at both the State and municipal levels, this particular kind was found only on the level of the latter.

The second type of initiative that finds itself in the category of fostering deliberation is one that connects citizens with their elected officials using the help of ICTs. For instance, in Virginia, the governor, Tim Kaine hosts two radio shows a month where he answers questions live and on the air. His website then culls the highlights and makes them available online64 in the form of a Podcast.65 Thus interested citizens can download audio clips of the mayor answering questions and listen to them instantly, instead of having to catch the radio show, or can download them onto an iPod or other device to listen on the go. By far the most advanced type of discussion forum is run the former-actor-turned-politician, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California. On his website,66 he hosts a live question and answer session once and a while that Californians, or anybody else, can watch live. After the videocast of his interactive session, citizens can download an archive. Both these

63 http://dialogues.listeningtothecity.org/
64 http://www.governor.virginia.gov/MediaRelations/MediaLibrary/podcasts.cfm
65 A Podcast is a media file downloaded on a subscription, automated basis and can be either free or paid (in this case it is free). It is related to the concept of RSS, which will be explained later.
66 http://gov.ca.gov/ask/
examples, at the state level, illustrate the potential for elected officials to use ICTs to help build a new, more interactive, relationship with their constituency. This works to break down the general impression that government officials are unaccountable since, with the click of a button, a citizen’s representative can be forced to answer a question.

The second category identified by the present typology, participation, accounts for 19% of cases encountered in the US survey. In the US, e-democracy initiatives that allowed constituents new means of participating in the process of governing are not limited to participating in political decision-making. There are four general types of cases that fit into this category. The first is the citizen feedback forum. This is a fairly standard tool that really consists of nothing more than a form for a citizen to fill in. Examples of the citizen feedback form appear on both the State and municipal levels in the American survey. To take a prototype of the municipal level we turn to Corpus Christi, Texas. On this website, citizens are invited to send the mayor a suggestion in a program called “Let the Mayor know.” The topics can be anything from a public works suggestion to budget suggestions. On the State level, Alaska provides a good example. In the program “Email the Governor,” citizens can email the governor about one of thirty topics. In other examples, citizens are invited to email not only the chief administrator but their legislators as well. While this type of e-democracy program is simple, it is highly effective reducing the transaction costs of offering citizen feedback to a level that is almost nonexistent.

The second type of initiative in this category allows citizens to begin the process of listing a ballot initiative by email. In the State of Colorado, there is a long list of preconditions to putting a referendum on the State ballot. However, to begin the process the citizen must send a proposal to a member of the legislature. However, the legislature has provided a website that invites the citizen to submit the proposal as well as receive feedback by email. While the entire process cannot be carried out online, the fact that the preliminary stages can be done with virtually no transaction cost is a significant step in opening up new means for citizens to participate in government.

67 “Let the Mayor know,” Corpus Christi, TX: http://www.cctexas.com/forms/Mayorsform/
68 “Email the Governor,” State of Alaska: http://www.gov.state.ak.us/govmail.php
69 See legislature website here: http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/lesstaff/initiative.htm
The third type of initiative offers the possibility of contracting with the government online. Since, in the American system of democracy, the government must make and oversee contracts with private parties, one municipality has introduced a means of conducting the bidding online. Delray Beach, a medium city in Florida offers the possibility of conducting business with the government through the website. Since citizens are not the only incorporated entities in the American system, it is significant that this municipality is beginning to incorporated businesses into the structure of e-democracy and offering them new means of participation.

The final type of initiative in this category offers citizens the possibility of participating in an e-budgeting process of some sort. While none of the e-democracy projects covered was found to allow the citizens to participate directly in the decision-making process, they do allow for an increased interaction between the citizens and the government on the topic of the budget. In two cities in Virginia, citizens are invited to fill out a survey concerning the budget and how it appears to them.70 The budgeting process in American typically consists of a long period of negotiations in the legislature, the body that typically decides the budget’s limits behind closed doors. Due to the complicated nature of the task, it is usually out of the citizen’s control. However, with the increased transparency offered by the internet, citizens can now offer feedback on the itemized budgets to which they never had access before the emergence of ICTs with such ease. Despite some very unique and innovative e-democracy programs enabling greater citizen participation, the overwhelming majority of cases in the US fall into the transparency category.

There are three types of e-democracy initiative in the US that are oriented toward increasing transparency, a category which accounts overall for 72% of the initiatives encountered. The first is an official blog. In all the cases identified, this blog is kept by the chief administrator of a municipality or other high-ranking administrative officials. For instance, in San Francisco, California, under the auspices of a program called, “Voices in the Administration,”71 citizens are invited to read the mayor’s frequent accounts of his daily activities and thoughts. The mayor’s blog posts are interspersed with occasional posts from other members of his administration.


71 http://www.sfgov.org/site/mayor_index.asp
who share important events or decisions they have made. In this way, the
municipality’s administration and the way it works become more open to the people.
In a similar project, the city of Los Angeles, California, offers on its municipal
webpage 6 different blogs\textsuperscript{72} kept by different administrative departments. For
instance, citizens can read the blogs of the LA Fire Department, Policy Department
and Department of Animal Services. The availability of information about the
government and its administrative process coming directly from those who make the
decisions cuts out the traditional middle-man, the media, begin to drastically change
the way in which citizens keep track of their governments. The next type of
transparency-enhancing initiative harnesses the full audio-visual power of
communication technology.

This second type is called a webcast. A webcast is a steam of data that a host
sends to a user which relies upon the presence of a digital media player to be turned
into audio or visual playback on the user-end. In other words, a webcast is a
soundtrack or a video sent to a PC. In the United States, the use of this technology by
legislatures on both the State and municipal levels is by far the most common type of
e-democracy initiative encountered. A few examples will highlight the power of this
transparency-enhancing tool. In Madison, Wisconsin, a city of about 220,000
residents, the “City’s Legislative Information Center”\textsuperscript{73} offers on its website the
option of streaming live or archived video of various legislative sessions of
subcommittee meetings of the city council. The city of Seattle, Washington, a city of
578,000 people, the municipal government offers live and archived broadcasts\textsuperscript{74} of
legislative sessions as part of its attempt to make the Seattle Channel’s coverage of
political activity available online. This sort of video webcasting is not only available
on the municipal level. Six of the eleven states survey offer video webcasts of the
legislative sessions either live or archived. Colorado’s is possible the most advanced,
offering webcasts that are broken down into subcommittee as well as general body
meetings.\textsuperscript{75} It also must be noted that this practice is not limited to those legislatures

\textsuperscript{72} See \url{http://www.lacity.org/lacity440.htm}

\textsuperscript{73} See \url{http://legistar.cityofmadison.com/mattersearch/home.aspx}

\textsuperscript{74} See Seattle.gov project at: \url{http://www.seattlechannel.org/}

\textsuperscript{75} See \url{http://www.leg.state.co.us/clics2004a/cslFrontPages.nsf/Audio?OpenForm}. For the other
states, please see the following websites: Alaska - \url{http://www.ktoo.org/gavel/stream.cfm}; Florida -
\url{http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/HouseCalendar/broadcast.aspx}; Texas -
that are responsible for large populations. In the town of Blacksburg, Virginia, with an estimated 39,000 residents, the municipal government makes broadcasts of the town meetings available on its website.\textsuperscript{76} Thus, at all levels of local government in the US, the practice of making the governing process more transparent by filming it and then broadcasting it on the internet is becoming more and more common. With little effort in terms of provision of the information, and even less effort in terms of consuming the information, citizens can keep track of their government’s activities.

The final type of transparency-enhancing e-democracy initiative is only type of project encountered that takes full advantage of Web2.0 technologies. Harnessing the power of RSS (Really Simple Syndication) technology, local governments in the US are revolutionizing information provision and transparency. RSS is a webtool that allows an internet user to choose to subscribe to information feeds in the form of video, audio, text or any combination thereof. The information is transmitted from the author to the user in the form of a broadcast, in that, when the user subscribes to the RSS Feed, she gives the address where she would like the information sent, and the author sends it automatically every time he publishes new data. The power of RSS is that it is customizable. Thus, when a legislative body chooses to publish its daily activities, briefings, and documents in an RSS Feed, it can create different categories to which its constituents can subscribe. For instance, the Utah State Legislature offers its web users the option of tracking a bill, a piece of legislation, by its assigned number.\textsuperscript{77} Every time that bill is debated or revised, the user receives an update to her RSS Reader telling her what has happened. The State Legislature of Minnesota allows the user to subscribe to a Podcast, using RSS Feeds, which allows the downloader to choose topic, bill number, or bill author.\textsuperscript{78} At the time of writing, there are six State legislatures in total in the US that use RSS technology to allow their citizens to track legislation.\textsuperscript{79} Some governmental offices have even taken this a step further, offering video and audio podcasts, which work on the same basis as an RSS feed except are meant to be automatically downloaded to an iPod and thus are

\textsuperscript{76} http://www.blacksburg.gov/granicus/about.php
\textsuperscript{77} See the Utah Track Legislation website at: \url{http://le.utah.gov/asp/billtrack/track.asp}
\textsuperscript{78} See the website at: \url{http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/lep/billsublogin.asp}
\textsuperscript{79} They are: Missouri, Texas, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Minnesota, and Utah.
exclusively audio or audio/visual. The city of Alexandria, Virginia offers audio podcasts of the day’s legislative activity.\textsuperscript{80} Governor Pawlenty of Minnesota offers audio podcasts of his activities and speeches.\textsuperscript{81}

While no video-podcasting was encountered, it is only a very simple combination of video webcasting and RSS technology that is required to create a video cast. In other words, local governments in the US are moving toward a system where citizens can keep track of important issues that are being debated by lawmakers using their computers to read about, listen, and watch these activities organized in many different ways. Furthermore, with the help of RSS technology and Podcasting, citizens can download and watch legislative sessions or watch their mayor or governor give a speech without even searching. This new type of technology allows for the delivery of a transcript, audio, or audio-visual clip direct the citizen’s PC or iPod. Enhancing transparency and keeping track of governmental activity does not get any simpler or more automated than this.

So where does this leave the US in terms of e-democracy and the problems facing its physical democracy. It is very possible that the initiatives uncovered by this survey address all the issues raised at the beginning of this country report. The problem of low voter turnout could be slowly reigned in by making government seem like less of a back-room process. When citizens can see politics happening, they are more likely to want to exercise their right to choose who makes the decisions they are watching on their screens. The low levels of accountability are definitely the target of these e-democracy initiatives since recording and filming government activity makes it harder for politicians to be dishonest. Finally, putting democracy online is a way to reach youth populations through a medium which they understand and upon which they also rely. There is one important caveat to this sort of enthusiasm which must be mentioned.

First, government organizations are probably not going to be the best source for innovation in e-democracy in the future. They certainly have the budgets to be on the cutting edge now, but the political motivation more likely lies with the parties. Every election cycle, which means every other year, the party apparatuses balloon and then contract in an effort to garner support and raise awareness about issues important to

\textsuperscript{80} http://www.ci.alexandria.va.us/podcasts/
\textsuperscript{81} http://www.governor.state.mn.us/mediacenter/podcasts/index.htm
the campaign. Furthermore, the American democracy is heavily focused on representation, meaning citizens tend to pay attention to politics around election times drastically more than other times. As such, there is probably not much market pressure for e-democracy services that allow citizens to participate. It is surprising that deliberative websites are not more commonly funded by governments, however. Therefore, it is likely that the next round of innovations in e-democracy will come from the parties and from private political advocacy groups that seek to organize large amounts of supports. They will most likely rely on Web2.0 functionality which allows for greater social networking and opening up new and interesting spaces for deliberation and political discussion. There is no denying that American is currently the most innovative example found in this survey in terms of providing greater transparency.
V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

In order to adequately compare the results compiled by this survey into local e-democracy practices, we choose to organize the data in a table according to the conceptual framework given in Section II above. Each of the examples mentioned in the case studies correspond to one of the categories listed in the table below. In order to begin to understand how they each interact, we give a brief description with reference to examples given and situate them properly in their category. We follow this up with five potential channels as to how these three dimensions may interact and suggest the most common type of initiatives.

1. Comparative Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>e-Techniques</th>
<th>Aspects of democracy promoted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increasing Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Website</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcasting</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSS/Podcast</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Voting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Consultation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Initiative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e-Contracting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum (unmonitored)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forum (monitored)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction (Audio/Visual)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Political Space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE I

Comparative Matrix
We begin with Dimension One: Increasing Transparency. As given in Section II, transparency-enhancing initiatives are ones “that take advantage of ICTs to bring information to citizens that would not otherwise be available.” Table 1 lists 5 types of e-democracy initiatives that fit this category. The first is the provision of a “Government Website.” For example, in the Switzerland case study we highlighted the website of the Canton of Geneva. The city’s website serves to provide information for all parts of the Canton’s government. The second type is a website that aims to make information more accessible to handicapped citizens. Take, for example, the “Demos.ct” project in Catania, Sicily from the Italian case study. The third is the creation of a blog kept by a politician. One might look as reference to the blogs kept by the mayors of Los Angeles or San Francisco from the US case study. The fourth type is webcasting. For good examples, take the legislative websites of Devon in the UK and Seattle in the US. This refers to the provision of videos of legislative sessions online. The fifth and final category of transparency-enhancing initiative is the RSS/Podcast. Found exclusively in the US, this is the incorporation of automatic publication technology to allow users to receive text, audio, visual, or all three types of information about the day’s congressional or administrative activities. We turn now to the Second Dimension

The Second Dimension is “Increasing Participation.” As defined in Section II, the e-democracy initiatives in this category are ones that use ICTs to promote citizen participation in the governing process. There are six specific types of e-democracy initiatives that fit this category. First, e-voting refers in this report to the casting of actual ballots online (internet voting). Two examples of this are Estonia’s national elections and the three cases mentioned in the Switzerland case study (Anières, Zurich, and Bülach). The second type is e-consultation. This refers to the gathering of opinions by governments using forms that citizens can complete to give feedback. One of the most innovative examples of this is the website run by Pestszentlőrinc-Pestimre (Budapest District XVIII) in Hungary which allows for the submission of opinions by email, web form, and SMS. The next type of initiative is listed in Table 1 as e-budget. This refers to a specific type of e-consultation that allows citizens to give feedback on the budget and how money is allocated. Two strong examples are the Municipio Partecipato project in Italy and the two US cities of Alexandria and Charlottesville in Virginia. The fourth type is e-survey, which refers to the taking of informal e-votes online. For instance, there were several instances of this in Spain,
the most notable being the non-binding referendum held online concerning the European Constitution. The fifth type is the e-initiative. In one instance, the State of Colorado, citizens can launch the ballot-initiative process through email. The final type is e-contracting. This refers to the ability to bid on government contracts online. The only example found was in the city of Delray Beach, Florida in the US.

The Third Dimension is “Increasing Deliberation,” which is defined in Section II as including those e-democracy initiatives that attempt to recreate a sense of the public sphere online. There are five types of e-democracy initiative in this category. The first is the online forum that is not incorporated into a formal procedure of governmental decision-making. There are many instances of this type of website but a good example is the forum in New York City that created a discussion about what to do with the former site of the World Trade Center in the US case study. The second type of initiative is the online forum that is integrated into government decision-making. In other words, governments that run this type of forum monitor the discussions to cull input into the formal decision-making process. Perhaps the best example of this is the Ciudadanos2010 project in Spain. The third initiative in this dimension is one that provides interaction between citizens and politicians in a way that allows for real discussion (as in, more than an email or filling out a form). Perhaps the best example of this is the Obuda-Beklás Online Mayor project. The fourth project listed in Table I under this dimension refers to those initiatives that attach an audio/visual element to this type of interaction. The only two examples of this practice were from the US case study. In California, Governor Schwarzenegger offers a live online video chat where he answers questions and discusses topics with citizens. In Virginia, Governor Kaine offers podcasts of his live radio call-in question and answer sessions. The final type of initiative in this dimension is titled “Mobilization” and refers to the possibility of proposing petition topics on a government website, debating them, and garnering signatures online using this innovative tool. The only example is in Bristol, in the UK.

It must be noted that there is one type of e-democracy project that transcends the differences between these three dimensions. We term this type of initiatives “online political spaces” because they are meant to provide information, allow for new modes of participation, as well as open new means of political discussion and argumentation and thus are really an attempt to re-create political space online. While few of these projects have achieved a comprehensive re-creation of all elements of public life.
online, a few examples are worth noting due to their breadth. In Argenta, Italy, although a small town, the municipal e-political space aims very high. So too do the online political spaces of Catalonia in Spain and Wolverhampton in the UK. These cross-cutting initiatives are only the most comprehensive of the examples found as many of the e-democracy initiatives are difficult to categorize with clarity.

2. Channels of Interaction

It is for that reason that we turn now to a brief description of if and how these e-democracy initiatives interact, as well as which dimensions and practices are generally favored. The answer to the first question is a confident ‘yes’ given the difficulty of classifying each initiative in only one category. For instance, the provision of a deliberative forum that is monitored by the government in order to cull insights into what citizen priorities clearly straddles the border of citizen participation and deliberation. Obviously the citizens have the chance to have a sustained political discussion. In addition they are passively participating in the political decision-making process since their arguments affect the decision makers. Thus the more important question is how these different types of initiatives interact.

In order to answer the second question, we choose five channels of potential interaction between the different dimensions. The first is the top-down organization of e-democracy provision in some cases. This phenomenon is most strongly felt in Switzerland (e-voting), the UK (ODPM), Italy (national electronic ID card), and Estonia (national e-voting and ID card). In these countries, some impetus for e-democracy initiatives at the local level comes from the same source, the central government. For instance, in Italy, the provision of the electronic national ID card made possible a platform in Argenta that includes not only local petitioning and referendum voting which rely on this card but also forums and information provision, thus branching across all three dimensions of the typology. Another example is the central funding in the UK, where the ODPM funded projects in the participation (for example, Swindon Micro-Democracy) as well as the deliberation dimension (Bristol). In this way, the funding structure can cause dimensions to interact when the central providing authority has mixed intentions.

The second inter-dimensional channel is involvement of the private sector. This channel exists when, based on the desires of the private financiers, projects may begin to affect each other. Two illustrative examples can be taken from the Spanish case.
First, in the Region of Catalonia, the Parlament Obert’s website Democràcia.web has received funding from Fundació Jaume Bofill. The parliamentary function of the website is to allow MPs to consult with citizens through feedback mechanisms. However, due to the partnership with the Foundation, a large educational initiative has been added to the webpage to create an awareness of e-democracy and e-democratic practices, not to mention the presence of web forums on top of this massive information database. In this way, this single initiative manages to cover many different dimensions of e-democracy. The second example is Ciudadanos2010. In this case, with funding from the Europa Press, the project has expanded to cover different e-democracy dimensions, serving as a, or at least aiming to provide a service that resembles, an online Greek Agora. The main idea of this channel of interaction is that with the help of private finance, projects often have the capability to provide a wider scope of e-democracy services under the same headline and thus include more dimensions than otherwise.

The third channel for interaction is based on pressure facing the democracy. In most longstanding Western democracies, for instance, the same three problems are common. These populations generally have low levels of political participation, high levels of skepticism concerning the accountability of political leaders, and low interest amongst the youth in political issues. Thus, in countries like the US and the UK, most e-democracy initiatives focus on enhancing participation or on providing information. However, it is often difficult to tell the difference between them as asking questions to your representative can be considered participation in terms of e-consultation and also the receipt of information since the citizen gains an insight into an area of political decision making that is not normally apparent. Thus, examples like “Ask your Governor” in Alaska or “Let the Mayor Know” in Corpus Christi in Texas and HearFromYourMP or “Your Norfolk Your Say” in the UK are generally participatory in nature but with the effect of providing information provision. Furthermore, in the more deliberation-oriented examples in both countries, often questioning your representatives or other political leaders is a way of participating that merely takes place online but this may also yield an inter-citizen debate or a real political discussion between politicians and citizens in a digital public forum. Thus, the democratic context in which the e-democracy initiatives exist can force a blurring of the borders between different dimensions.
The fourth potential channel for crossover is budgetary constraints. While budgetary constraints can lead to the seeking of help from the private sector, as in the second channel presented above, they can also force innovations that blur the differences between different dimensions. For instance, in Hungary, in the municipality of Hajduszoboszlo, the online political space created by the municipal government relied upon open-source technology. While initially the website was targeted at providing information, when the government decided to add a forum, the cost was virtually nothing, since this was easily integrated into the open-source platform. Since that introduction, not only is there a deliberative forum for the citizens of this city to use but it is also monitored by local politicians, making this a method for political participation as well. Thus, in a context of a government with little support from the central authority for experimenting with e-democracy, even here different types of initiatives can interact.

The final channel is the interaction between different projects. There is also the question of how pre-existing initiatives influence new projects. This most certainly happens and a perfect example is Switzerland. The federal government has been very interesting in internet voting as a way of addressing low voter turnouts across the country. Thus, it ran a test project in Anières and then, with the lessons learned, ran an e-voting project on a much larger scale, covering the entire canton of Zurich. Also, taking Italy as an example, the Argenta project has been contacted and referenced many times in attempts to re-create this online political space in other areas.\(^\text{82}\) In a third example, the Ciudadanos2010 project in Spain is really a series of projects that work on the same technological platform and thus the multiple reproductions of this strategy produce a learning curve that can provide a literal knowledge base along with the initiation of a new e-democracy project. In short, it is quite clear that local e-democracy projects within national boundaries interact in a very significant manner, and in many different ways. We are surprised that there is little evidence of international influence although we hope that this is a niche our report will begin to fill.

\(^{82}\) See the Argenta case study in Annex II.
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the major trends encountered and recommendations for improving both the practice of providing e-democracy and its study amongst social scientists. There are four major trends which we present immediately. This is followed by the recommendations.

The first point that must be made is that the survey uncovered two overwhelmingly popular types of e-democracy initiative. Excluding the tremendous number of examples in the US of webcasting, the two e-tools with the most examples are e-consultation and online forums. The most common type of e-democracy practice encountered was the forum, although almost all of them were underutilized by their target audience. After forums, the next most popular example encountered was e-consultation. The ubiquity of these two types of e-democracy initiative is generally unsurprising as a reaction to a perceived lack of public participation in the democratic process. However, unfortunately the generally low levels of use that these projects have experienced are an indicator that the provision of a service is not enough. Rather, it must be integrated with other governmental efforts to promote participation and dialogue.

The most innovative practices were those that mixed technologies. In the US, the reliance upon Web2.0 technologies such as RSS Feeds and video sharing have enabled the automated delivery of information about the government that come pre-tailored to the citizens’ interests. It has also made possible new means of participating and holding leaders accountable with video question and answer sessions. The most common mix of technology in the US appears to be the video recording of legislative sessions for archive online and this is quite significant because it opens up the actual decision-making process to anybody with internet access. In both Estonia and Italy, the integration of e-democracy initiatives with the implementation of a national digital smart/ID card has enabled some initiatives to take off, being able to rely on citizen authentication. The main point is that, while there are fewer examples of this kind of initiative than of online forums and e-consultation tools, these initiatives have much more potential to have an effect on the democratic process as their technological capacities tend to multiply each other.

The next trend that must be noted is that successful e-democracy programs have conformed well to their context. Taking e-voting as an example, one can see a
variation in results. While in Spain it was impossible to implement a binding e-vote, given the high levels of criticism of the government and its accountability, in Switzerland, where the government is generally seen as more responsible and capable, e-voting is entirely possible. Also, the paucity of examples of deliberation initiatives in the US when compared with the successful implementation of deliberative programs in Hungary and Estonia implies that the high level of disaffection toward the democratic institutions in America as well as other Western democracies make this kind of initiative more difficult. It seems that the democratic context of these newly independent states does not include the same level of withdrawal from political discussion that exists in more long-standing democracies. This is to say that the democratic context of a country shapes the market for consumption of e-democracy services in a significant way.

The final trend is the lack of attention paid to the digital divide. There were only a handful of examples uncovered of initiatives that attempted to offer, in conjunction with other e-democracy services, public access points or computer education classes. This is a very serious problem since little can be achieved in the field of e-democracy if the potential user base does not represent the actual constituency of the political unit. It is a fundamental condition of the public sphere to be as inclusive as possible and thus it is impossible to talk about approximations of this political space online, not to mention a total migration.

Overall, we were pleasantly surprised by the results given our hypotheses. Our first hypothesis, that participation and transparency would receive most of the attention was not totally correct. While transparency provision is heavy in the US case, this is not so elsewhere. Even in the US, we are surprised to see such technology-driven approaches to information provision. However, we were wrong in our expectation that deliberative spaces would not be a significant subject of initiatives. In fact, it was the most common type of initiative encountered. With respect to our second hypothesis, we were happily incorrect to assume that the most innovative solutions came from the northern, western countries. In fact, some of the most innovative examples were from Spain, Italy, and Hungary. The Ciudadanos2010, the Municipio Partecipato, and the Online Mayor project are all extremely innovative e-democracy initiatives which often must rely on funding outside of a typical top-down funding scheme for support. These are just three examples that show how e-democracy does not require a long-established democratic
context or a large budget to find success in revolutionizing the relationship between citizens and their governments with the help of ICTs.

Thus we offer five distinct policy recommendations. First and foremost, it is most important to provide services in which the public is interested. Introducing e-voting in even local conditions in the US is unlikely to see high levels of success as the government is not even trusted to correctly carry out regular votes. On the same token, in the US context, online public forums are unlikely to catch on very well since citizens tend to be interested in passively participating in government through the representative process. However, they are keenly interested in keeping tabs on the jobs their representatives do in office.

Second, it is potentially useful to have the central government play a limited role in coordinating e-democracy initiatives because it has the potential to learn and adopt new practices much better than disaggregated unites. This can be demonstrated by the ODPM in Britain and the central government of Estonia and Switzerland. It is critical that central government involvement must not interfere with the learning process or impose decisions that counter local trends and needs.

Third, high levels of funding are not so important. For instance, the very successful webcasting and RSS programs in the US do not require much money to run. The key is the code. Also, in Hungary and Italy, due to a lack of central government funding, many platforms are run with open source technology, dramatically lowering costs.

Fourth, and related to the third point, if money is needed and the central government tends to have a narrow focus, ie., in Switzerland and Spain (both focusing on e-voting), there is the potential for support from private investors. Spain’s examples provide a good example.

Fifth, and inspired mostly by the US case, it is important to consider where the political motivation lies and where the interest in participation is focused. In the US at least, citizens tend to pay attention to politics during election periods and not much during other times. Thus, it is likely that citizens are more willing to participate in discussion forums that are run by political parties of candidates than they are by an elected government. The idea is that they have much more potential to affect change at election times, when politicians really must listen. This is not limited to the US case since, in liberal democracies, the burden of winning support lies with the parties.
They are thus likely to have the highest incentive to seek out new ways to gain exposure and support through innovative use of ICTs.

This report offers two research recommendations. First we argue that more work needs to be done to figure out how best to ameliorate the problem of the digital divide. The potential costs of this endeavor require a well-though-ought approach. We argue second that more investigation is needed to figure out exactly what types of pre-conditions correlate to success in different types of initiatives. There are so many variables in the background of any single initiative that, as the trend toward e-democracy practices continues to solidify, the more powerful ones may become clearer.
ANNEX 1: NOTABLE INITIATIVES

ESTONIA
DIRECT DEMOCRACY PORTAL

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   Estonia

2. Size (population of locality):
   1.4 million inhabitants

3. Title of initiative:
   Direct democracy portal TOM – Today I decide

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
   www.eesti.ee/tom

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   Eleka Rugam-Rebane

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   Administrator of the website

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   +372 693 5744

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   eleka.rugam-rebane@rk.ee

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words):
   The goal of the Today I Decide system is to increase public involvement or public
   participation in the decision-making process. TOM is an electronic tool for public
   participation. It is possible to submit ideas and guidelines and to comment on the
   submission of others. The process may be divided into 5 steps from the submission of
   an idea until its implementation.
   1. Submission of an idea – the submitter gives a title to the idea, provides the names
      of the authors, a resume and the content of the idea.
   2. After the submission of the idea, registered uses of the portal have 14 days to
      comment on idea by submitting their proposals and thoughts in connection with the
      idea.
   3. This is followed by the editing period – the originator of the idea takes into
      consideration proposals of other and makes amendments if necessary.
   4. The idea is voted on – everybody can vote for or against. The idea is approved by a
      simple majority.
   5. After positive result of the voting, the idea/proposal moves to the ministry whose
      administrative area it belongs to. According to the Public Information Act, the state
agency has one month to submit a reasoned answer. The answer is published in the portal and also sent via e-mail to the originator of the idea.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)?
No.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The Estonian government’s e-democracy portal TOM was launched 5 years ago, in June, 2001 by the decision of the prime minister. The political will to “make it happen” was important in order to overcome the only major obstacle for TOM – skeptical attitudes about whether it was worth trying.

The principal flow-chart of the TOM has remained the same during whole period, in 2005 some minor modifications have been introduced.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
TOM as a democracy initiative is related to e-government of Estonia

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
State Chancellery of the Republic of Estonia

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
It was clearly the mission and initiative of the State Chancellery.

8. Were there any other key actors?
No.

9. How was the project financed?
The project was financed by State Chancellery

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
TOM is going to be integrated into the new public participation website (online consultations, public initiative, legislative “observatory”) which will be launched during autumn 2006.
Purpose of this central participation website is to assemble all information about public involvement in Estonia so that those interested in the topic would be able to find information from one source. The idea is to offer on that central website the possibility for ministries, which do not have their own e-participation environments to
start e-consultations or to offer the possibility for NGOs to participate in decision-making more efficiently and transparently.

**D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE**

11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
   Internet.

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
   TOM is an e-participation tool for all Estonian inhabitants

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
   TOM is open for proposals and ideas from different areas and it serves every citizen who wants to express his/her opinion on government matters or issues of public policy.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
   Press releases, interviews, articles

**E. LESSONS (where relevant)**

15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

   15.i. Political
   Initially State Chancellery experienced difficulties with the ministries giving vague/unclear answers to the ideas and rejecting them on formal grounds.

   15.ii. Financial
   The administration of the portal requires more staff; financial restrictions did not allow to employ additional people

   15.iii. Technical
   

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives? Quick response to the problems/ideas; straightforward and clear answers from the state agencies; user-friendly interface; user statistics; transparent decision-making
**F. EVALUATION**

18. **What were the main achievements of initiatives?**
TOM is relatively well known among Estonian people. This portal first time demonstrated the possibility to use new technology for citizen empowerment. Several interesting ideas have been proposed via TOM. Even in the case the idea was not implemented there was a reasoning given publicly why it has not been accepted. It means that an important aspect of TOM is citizen’s education.

19. **What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?**
Number of registered users, number of ideas submitted, number of comments, number of visitors; see statistics in [http://www.ega.ee/?id=26936](http://www.ega.ee/?id=26936)

20. **What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?**
A new public participation website will be launched during the autumn 2006.
ESTONIA
NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMITTEE, TALLINN

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
National Electoral Committee, Tallinn, Estonia

2. Size (population of locality):
Estonian population number is 1.34 million; number of eligible voters is about 1 million.

3. Title of initiative:
Internet voting

4. URL/address of website (where relevant): http://www.vvk.ee/engindex.html

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Epp Maaten, councillor of the elections department of the Chancellery of the Riigikogu (Parliament).

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Elections department assists National Electoral Committee in organising elections in Estonia. Mrs Maaten's assignments are among others the operation of the electoral data system and coordination of electoral IT projects including Internet voting.

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
Epp Maaten
Elections Department of the Chancellery of the Riigikogu
Lossi pl 1a, 15165 Tallinn
Ph: +372 6316438
Fax: +372 6316541

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
E-mail: epp.maaten@riigikogu.ee

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words):
The Estonian Internet voting project serves the government's goal of using technology to make the public sector more efficient and customer-friendly. Considering also that voting turnout trend is declining and one reason behind that is the low participation of younger people, Internet voting serves as an instrument to bring more people to vote.

In 2002 Estonian Parliament created a legislative basis to conduct Internet voting in all elections and referendums. After the political decision National Electoral Committee started the project to implement the Internet voting from year 2005 as the law has foreseen it
To realize real savings from the implementation of e-services, both in terms of time and money, in 1998 government initiated a national ID card project. The smartcard, compulsory for every Estonian resident, was introduced. ID card may be a physical document, but it also functions as an electronic identity, enabling to give digital signatures and to use services online conveniently and securely. The Public Key Infrastructure necessary for secure use of ID card had been developed in Estonia by the end of 2001.

The widespread use of national ID card was vital for introducing the Internet voting. ID cards have been issued for 4 years now and by February 2006, the respective figure was about 900,000; thus, most of eligible voters (1.06 Mio in municipal elections) hold the card already.

In municipal elections 2005 e-voting took place during advance polls (sixth to fourth day before election day) and ID-cards were used for voter authentication. Only authenticated persons with the right to vote were able to vote, meaning that a database of citizens with the right to vote was developed prior to elections. The number of valid e-votes were 9287 making 1.85% of all votes cast.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
Estonian Government

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)?
-No

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
In 1998 the initial idea was to introduce an identification card, compulsory for every Estonian resident, which may be a physical document, but it also functions as an electronic identity, enabling to give digital signatures and to use services online conveniently and securely.

The idea of electronic voting in 2000 came along with the introduction of ID card.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
Technology enables citizens to take an active part in policy making; thus, it is becoming an integral part of the democratic process. In the end of the 1990s one of the government's goals was to use technology to make the public sector more efficient, customer-friendly and transparent. Different projects like the portal “Today I Make Decisions” which enables to submit ideas and to comment on the draft legislative acts, the official legislation information system eState Gazette, E-Citizen portal to provide citizen-oriented e-services and other projects have been initiated to improve the communication between the state and citizens.
Thanks to technology, also representative democracy can be strengthened by making it easier and more convenient to hold elections and public consultations. Thus, in 2000 the Internet voting project was initiated.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
National Electoral Committee is the highest electoral body in Estonia that conducts elections, verifies election results, exercises supervision over other electoral committees and resolves complaints. The 7 members of the National Electoral Committee are a judge of a court of first instance, a judge of a court of appeal, an adviser to the Legal Chancellor, an official of the State Audit Office, a public prosecutor, an official of the Chancellery of the Riigikogu and an official of the State Chancellery. Committee is a non-political body.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
Electronic voting project was lead by National Electoral Committee. The other actors have been:
- Ministry of Internal Affairs as maintainer of the population register;
- city of Tallinn as organiser of the first public trial;
- Sertifitseerimiskeskus Ltd as maintainer of the infrastructure necessary for issuing and using the ID card;
- Chancellery of the Riigikogu as provider of the operational and clerical support to NEC;
- Cybernetica Ltd as software developer;
- KPMG Baltics Ltd as auditor.

8. Were there any other key actors?
At the beginning of the Internet voting project National Electoral Committee involved as many specialists in the field of IT and its security as possible to elaborate a commonly acceptable approach and thereby to raise public trust in Internet voting. Trust, amplifying through media, is an important part of a successfully launched Internet based solutions.

9. How was the project financed?
From state budget

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
According to electoral laws Internet voting will be implemented in all coming elections and referendums. Internet voting system is also useable for consultative referendums and polling in smaller scale, for instance in regions, municipalities etc.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Estonian electronic voting is remote voting via Internet.
12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
As target group all eligible voters may be seen, but considering that voting turnout trend is declining and one reason behind that is the low participation of younger people, Internet voting serves as an instrument to bring younger people to vote. Thanks to Internet voting accessibility is widened and voting is made more convenient for disabled or elderly people who have difficulties to visit polling station.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Elections

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
A campaign to promote the participation in general was carried out. Different channels like TV, radio, posters, leaflets, newspapers, but also Internet were used for advertising. Every voter got a voting card which consist all significant information about different voting methods.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed?
Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
Despite the fact that in 2002 Estonian parliament legalised Internet voting, several months before the first implementation the controversy over Internet voting between parliament and president arose. The decision of the Supreme Court finishing the debate was made only few weeks before voting started in September 2005. In consequence of that the campaign as well as the training to present the new voting method was short and from the voters’ point of view disturbed by confusing messages.

15.ii. Financial
An important aspect of organising elections is the cost efficiency. If there has not been a national population register nor the authentication system using the ID cards in Estonia, Internet elections would have been very costly. Thanks to following the concept that IT systems in a public sector should function as a whole government spared a lot.

15.iii. Technical
One major problem which needs to be overcome for e-democracy to be successful is that of citizen identification. For secure elections and other secure citizen-to-government transactions, citizens must have some form of identification that preserves privacy. Estonia has implemented ID card as the primary document for identifying its citizens and alien residents living within the country. The card, besides being a physical identification document, has advanced electronic functions that facilitate secure authentication and legally binding digital signature, in connection with nationwide online services. The card is meant to be universal and its functions are to be used in any form of business, governmental or private communications. It is
helping people to make everyday communications more convenient. The widespread use of national ID card was vital for starting the Internet voting project.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?

Internet voting was an additional voting method. All traditional voting methods were preserved.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?

According to different surveys in Estonia the use of digital channels is steadily widening and different e-services provided both by the public and the private sector are used extensively. Frequently parallels are drawn for instance between Internet banking and voting to justify the self-evidence and necessity of Internet voting. Internet voting has been seen as a key element of the process in making public services available more conveniently.

F. EVALUATION

For each initiative the country analyst will identify an expert who has knowledge/involvement in the initiative. They will be asked to enter responses to the following questions:

18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?

In October 2005 Internet voting was applied for the very first time. Internet voting is just one part of a whole concept of e-government. Voting is one of the most attractive mechanisms of democracy and thereby it may attract people to come closer to other e-services as well as to technology in place. In Estonia’s case it is important to notice that over 60% of Internet voters by giving a digital signature were using their ID card electronically for the very first time.

A survey of Estonian voters made in December 2005 by initiative of the Council of Europe showed that voters who decided to vote electronically preferred the new voting method mostly because of its convenience. Impacts on choosing Internet voting over voting at polling station were trust in e-voting and sufficient computer knowledge. An important conclusion of the survey was that voters’ age, gender, political views, income and education did not have a significant impact on decision whether to vote over the Internet or at polling place. It means that the fear that Internet voting widens the digital divide did not turned out to be entirely correct.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?

Considering the fact that voters are not yet using their eID card electronically widely, the turnout of e-voters was not a main evaluation criterion. The occasion of first

---

Internet voting shall be considered purposeful – all systems and procedures worked and there were no security problems.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
Elections in October 2005 were historical since it was the first time when Internet voting with binding results was applied countrywide and according to law it will be implemented also in all coming elections and referendums. Internet voting does not replace the traditional methods in near future, but in long perspective Internet voting will be as natural as the one with paper ballot.
ESTONIA
TAPA MUNICIPALITY

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   Tapa Municipality

2. Size (population of locality):
   9448 inhabitants (1st Jan. 2006)

3. Title of initiative:
   Development of the Home Page and home page related to e-democracy

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
   http://www.tapa.ee/

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   Teet Koitjärv

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   Deputy Mayor

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   +372 3229655 (phone), +372 56476301 (GSM)

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   teet.koitjarv@tapa.ee

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words);
   Tapa Municipality is a new local government, established at October 2005 through
   joining together of Tapa City Municipality and Lehtse and Saksi Rural Municipalities.
   In this case is very important to establish a new information channels for inhabitants,
   to develop common base for e-democracy and to start building of new image of new
   municipality.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil
   servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down
   (e.g. local government)?
   Local government - top-down.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that
   were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional,
   national or international actor)?
   Nobody.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
   At December 2005 was started a planning process.
5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
This idea is based on the wider legal and practical initiatives in Estonia – by the Public Information Law every public body (incl. Local government) must be develop a Home Page. Our vision developed this idea – established was also a online public forum.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
Deputy Mayor of Municipality as civil servant of local government.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
Inside of our Municipality is responsibility for establishment and development shared between different officials. Outside is our partner a private company for development of information systems.

8. Were there any other key actors?
No.

9. How was the project financed?
From budget of the Municipality.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
We are planning to finance this project by same way also in the future years.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Internet.

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
a) inhabitants of municipality
b) other interested people

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Consultation of urban and rural planning, environment, management of public interests (public roads, education etc.).

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Press Release & direct e-mailing & articles in newspapers.
E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
No.

15.ii. Financial
No.

15.iii. Technical
No.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
Development of citizens access is very important issue in all governing levels in Estonia, especially also in local municipalities. Now is digital access in our municipality growing into 90% at end of this year (2006). Today more than 75% of citizens our municipality have alternative commercial (WiFi, ADSL-connections) or non-commercial (Public Internet Points) possibilities for access into the internet.

Coverage is a technical measurement.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
Demand was very high and citizens was very interested about development such kind of e-democracy instruments.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
Public forum for citizens to discuss the maters of common concern.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
Number of questions and propositions, frequency of questions, citizens satisfaction, responsiveness of decision-makers.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
Online forum will be used to discuss all important issues of the Municipality.
HUNGARY
BUDAPEST DISTRICT THREE – ONLINE MAYOR

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
Obuda-Bekasmegyer (Budapest District III)

2. Size (population of locality):
127,557 (in 2004; 149,028 in 1990)

3. Title of initiative:
The Online Mayor (Polgármester Online)

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
http://www.obuda.hu/forumarch.php?athoz=20*0*1

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Mária Somlyó Szűcs

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Press Officer

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
Budapest, Fõ tér 3 I.em. 27. szoba.
+36 1 437 8587

5.iii. Email of interviewed expert:
Szucs.Somlyo@obuda.hu

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Brief description of the initiative
Citizens can talk to their mayor in online form. The event takes place every third month. Those who would like to participate have to register beforehand. The registration does not require actual personal data; therefore, many users register using a nickname. The two-hour interaction is basically a kind of chat between the mayor and participants.

Obuda-Bekasmegyer is the second largest district of Budapest. It is the most ancient part of the city, as the Romans already founded Aquincum, the capitol city of Pannonia, in the place of a Celtic settlement. Socially, the district has two faces: certain parts are considered as elegant (upper) middle class neighborhoods (Obuda), while Bekasmegyer is dominated by housing estates. The Obuda Island hosts the Sziget Festival, a major music and cultural event.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
It was initiated by the Press Officer.
3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
No.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The project was initiated in 2004. It has since been organized four times a year. The number of registered users has increased from a dozen to 60. Three timing were tried out: 10-12 am, 1-3 pm, 4-6 pm. The slot between 1 and 3 pm proved to be the best [probably because most people use the Internet in their workplace].

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
No relation is conceptualized.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The press officer is in charge of the organization of the project and, obviously, the mayor is responsible for the content of the answers.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
No partners were involved.

8. Were there any other key actors?
No.

9. How was the project financed?
Within the budget of the website.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
The event is expected to take place regularly in the future too.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Chat. The online conversation can be read on the website. If the mayor cannot respond to a question during the chat, the answers are also posted on the website of the local government. Technically speaking, two computers are used: the press officer reads the questions on one of them and regulates the sequence of answers; the mayor’s secretary uses the other one to type the words of her boss.

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
The young intellectual, who does not attend 'offline forums' and does not complain to the local administration.
13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Various issues of the district have been come up in the chats.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
The opportunity is advertised one month before the event in the local newspaper, called 'Buda,' and on the website.

_E. LESSONS (where relevant)_

15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:
None.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
The local government has never addressed this problem.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
The number of participants has increased a lot, but their absolute number is still limited. On the other hand, it is unlikely that many people could technically participate in the event.

_F. EVALUATION_

18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
More people have come to be interested in the participation. The conversation is widely read on the website. In addition to the local newspaper, maintained by the local government, a Budapest-wide newspaper also reported on the event.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT’s, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
No formal evaluation exists, but the leadership discusses it.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
No such plans.
HUNGARY
KOMLÓ FORUM

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
Komló

2. Size (population of locality):
27372 (decreasing)

3. Title of initiative:
Forum

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
http://www.komlo.hu/index2.php?m=28

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Jankovics Antal

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Website content manager

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
7300 Komló, Városház Tér 3.
Tel.: 72/584000
Mobile: +36 30 217 8171

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
(telephone interview)

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Brief description of the initiative
The project provides local citizens with an opportunity to express their opinion on local issues and whatever else they would like to discuss in a community. The initiative is highly successful, as thousands of contributions on hundreds of topics have been made in a small town for less than three years.

Komlo is a town in Southern Hungary. Formerly, it was a mining centre. After the collapse of the industry, the local economy fell into depression and the recovery has been a slow process.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
In a sense, the project was born out of the interplay of certain circumstances. In 2003, the local government ordered a new website from a private company. The company felt that a forum component was a standard element of any modern website. Thus, the new homepage contained this opportunity as well. Citizens discovered this and spontaneously started to use it. No formal decision has ever been made.
3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)?
No.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The forums began to operate in August 2003. The conception, which was absolutely technically, rather than politically, formulated, has not changed. The size of the project has expanded dramatically with the exponential increase of participants.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
It is a part of the website project, which is considered as a democracy initiative.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The content editor is in charge of the forums. He also moderates them, although the sheer amount of comments, his other duties and his liberal approach do not allow more than the deletion of the most vulgar contributions. No formal supervision exists.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
A company provides the technical part of the website management.

8. Were there any other key actors?
No.

9. How was the project financed?
As a part of the budget of the local government website.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
No plans.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Website builder (PHP and HTML).

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
All citizens of the town.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
The range of issues is quite large. Many discussions revolve around actual party fights, which colours participants’ opinion on policy issues too. As usual, roads and other infrastructure problems are widely debated. There are non-partisan forums, where specific topics, e.g. transportation, are discussed.
14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
There is a link to it on the main page of the website.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
In the beginning, some of the councillors were taken aback by the vulgarity of certain comments and their anonymity, and demanded some kind of strong moderation. However, the idea of 'censorship' sounded bad in the democratization context and the principle that public actors must tolerate more criticism was strongly supported. Thus, no moderation was introduced.

15.ii. Financial
No such problem.

15.iii. Technical
No such problem.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
The local government has never addressed this problem.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
The large number of citizen comments clearly demonstrates the demands.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
First of all, lots of people were actively involved in intensive discussions on local as well as non-local political questions. After the start of forums, some of the councillors found it important to respond to certain questions and criticisms. Later, such efforts have become rarer. Still, both representatives and administrators regularly read the forums and regard them as a source of information on problems and satisfaction.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
No formal evaluation exists.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
The importance of online communication has become accepted, but no clear initiative has been formulated.
HUNGARY
PECS WIFI ZONE

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   Pecs

2. Size (population of locality):
   157,332 (decreasing)

3. Title of initiative:
   Free hot spot (free wifi connection in the downtown)

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
   n.a.
   A newspaper article on the initiative:
   http://www.e-government.hu/digitalcity/news.jsp?dom=AAAAGCAI&prt=AAAAFZMK&fmn=A
   AAAFZMP&men=AAAAFZMU&hir=AAAARWFK

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   a) László Zalán
   b) Attila Pál

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   a) head of the department of informatics
   b) manager of the nonprofit company of the local government

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   a) Pécs Megyei Jogú Város Polgármesteri Hivatal
      7621 Pécs, Széchenyi tér 1.
      +36 72 533 866
   b) EuNet 2000 Informatikai Kht.
      +36 72 514-819

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   n.a. (telephone interview)

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Brief description of the initiative
   The local government and a private company that provides wireless Internet services in the city made an agreement that a hot spot would be free in the very downtown area. The private company is willing to cover a large part of the costs in exchange for local government contracts in the past and in the future. [The evaluation of such agreements may range from the celebration of public-private partnership and network governance to the rejection of opaque corrupt practices.]

   The service started in February 2006. The first user was a high profile politician, the minister in charge of informatics, who is from the same party as the mayor. The
national elections took place in April.

Pecs is a major city, located in Southern Hungary. It is a service and university centre. Its downtown is a popular tourist destination. It will be one of the cultural capitals of Europe in 2010, which already induces developments like the presented initiative.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
The free access was initiated by the non-profit company in the municipality, strongly backed by local government leaders.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
No.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
It was initiated in the beginning of 2006 and began to operate a few months later. No change in the conception has so far happened.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
The initiative is related to two policy goals of the city. One is local development through tourism. The other is the bridging of the digital divide.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
Technically, the service is provided by a private company that has five other (not free) hot spots in the city. The partner on behalf of the local government is a non-profit firm of the municipality.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
No other partners are involved.

8. Were there any other key actors?
No.

9. How was the project financed?
Approximately 30 percent of the costs are paid by the local government company. The rest is covered by the private company.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
The local government company responsible for informatics development would like to enlarge the free wireless Internet access to the whole city. The first step in this process is to enlarge the coverage on other streets in the historic downtown area, since that would contribute to the local economic goals too. The company intends to cover the costs from the income of its other activities: website building, tender writing, and
Internet services.

**D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE**

11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Wireless Internet (access point).

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
Participants in local events, citizens without broadband access, tourists.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Economic development and the digital divide.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
No advertisement has been made so far. However, much PR work was done when the service started off.

**E. LESSONS**

15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
No such problems.

15.ii. Financial
No such problems. [In the long run, one may easily imagine such problems, as financing is based on a balance that may shift later.]

15.iii. Technical
No such problems.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
The local government addressed this problem through the same initiative. In addition, two touch-screen terminals providing free access to the Internet will be installed in the city. In the beginning, full access to the Internet will be available, but the local government maintains the right to restrict the scope of available URLs. This project is intended to be enlarged in the years to come.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
Local citizens use this free service.
**F. EVALUATION**

18. What were the main achievements of initiatives? 
Citizens and tourists alike started to use the service. That contributed to local democracy as well as economic development.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)? 
No formal evaluation system exists. The project has just started, so the expectation is to review the usage statistics later. Nonetheless, the non-profit company responsible for the service has no formal duty to report on the achievements.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one? 
The non-profit company of the local government, in charge of informatics developments in general and the free hot spot in particular, plan to enlarge this service to the larger downtown area of the city where most local events for tourists as well as local citizens take place.
ITALY
ARGENTA – IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
Municipality of Argenta (Ferrara)

2. Size (population of locality):
22,000 inhabitants including the municipality of Argenta and 14 minor/small municipalities served.

3. Title of initiative:
Municipality of Argenta website and e-democracy applications

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
www.comune.argenta.fe.it

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Roberto Lanzarone

1. Function of interviewed expert:
Expert in ICT and web activities

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
tf. +39.0532. 330312
Mobile: +39.329.8323763

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
webmaster@commune.argenta.fe.it

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words), this might be created by the analyst.
Our goals can be expressed in 4 steps:
1. Reducing digital divide;
2. Involving citizens in the municipal life by means of e-democracy;
3. Involving stakeholders in strategic decisions;
4. Developing tools to evaluate the results of local politics. The Argenta Municipality created an online application which is targeted at all citizens in the area.

Some “Technological Oases” have been created as places where people who have problems using technology can learn how to use the e-government services and the e-democracy tools that the Municipality has developed. In a special website (http://www.comune.argenta.fe.it/e-democracy/e-democracy.aspx) citizens can take part in a forum about important local events, make proposals or send petitions by means of a special form, or enter a chat room to get in touch with the local administrators; they can also vote in local referendums (only the local rules accept the electronic vote as valid. It’s not the same in national referendum or in any political
The main problem with the forum is that the citizens’ participation is still very poor. The managers have worked very hard to change this, even involving the mayor, yet there is still only little attention paid by the population.

Newsletters (several different ones that vary according to citizens needs: a general one with calls and initiatives, one addressed to young citizens and one to tourism operators with forthcoming events) and a magazine are sent to the citizens to give them news about municipal activities and events. A panel has been gathered to consult on important choices regarding the city and the citizens and specialized electronic tools are used in the activities that involve it.

There’s also a statistic report concerning the most important matters in the economic, social and civil life of the city that’s updated from time to time. Maybe the most important technology involved in the projects is the Carta Nazionale dei Servizi (CNS), a smart card that - according to the Italian law - should become the main way to have access to the e-government services across the whole Italian public Administration. Argenta Municipality is a vanguard in testing the CNS in terms of both technologies and administrative process reengineering.

The main activities performed by the application includes fostering relations with citizens, online registration of births, marriage and death, as well as checking bills and taxes online.

The project also allows online payments and has developed an online tool to convene the town council, saving paper and post costs. In this system, each councilor receives an email and then he/she can access a personal area on an intranet with the details and documentation concerning the council’s agenda.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
This is a top-down initiative, lead by the local municipality and well-received by the population. The head of the project is Dr. Pietro Buzzi and the project actually involves 120 workers, divided in 6 main areas.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
Everything we planned to do and have done was supervised by the local Province but there was no direct involvement.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The first website of the project was launched in September 2004. By the end of 2004, e-democracy initiatives have been started.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
We have some links with Partecipa.net, a regional experience which has taken off only recently. We began independently, before Partecipa.net, because we wanted to provide online services to our citizens as soon as possible and the only way to be able to work quickly and efficiently at that time (2004) was to work alone.

**C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE**

6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
Dr. Buzzi is the head and chief executive responsible. He is a civil servant working in our municipality.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
We didn’t involve any external partners. We prefer to develop everything independently by ourselves.

8. Were there any other key actors?
We were helped a great deal by 2 people, one from the public relations office and the other a press agent collaborator of ours.

9. How was the project financed?
We financed everything autonomously. We have been able to keep costs low thanks to our choice to use Open Source technologies.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
We plan to continue as we have through today, using our financial resources autonomously and developing precise and proactive work plans.

**D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE**

11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
We rely upon e-democracy software and tools (such as Delphy panel), content management systems and other instruments to make the Internet more and more usable.

We use mainly internet and web applications developed with open source technologies. We are planning a new SMS service to keep citizens informed on the local initiatives. We are also designing a new service trying to categorize information according to the citizens' needs (i.e., information about tourism, taxation, traffic, etc).

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighborhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
We targeted all citizens living in the area, including even the smallest municipalities. We are able to cover the whole area with our services.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
We focused mainly on policy about information management. We are also working on policy for online consultation.
14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
We hadn't planned a real promotion, we just issued some press releases through a newsletter service and we publicize our initiative also in our own publication twice a year. We also make handouts and posters and we put them up in crowded public offices and in strategic places where citizens can have a look to them.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
Ours is a political project and we’ve been well supported.

15.ii. Financial
Financing our project was not a problem, we have kept costs as low as possible and we have succeeded very well.

15.iii. Technical
We adopted open source technologies and the work is still going on. The next challenge is to harmonize forums and statistics as well as developing some new tools soon.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens’ access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
Digital divide is a big issue: if we want to create a real e-democracy experience, we need to train and tutor citizens to use these new technologies. Thus we manage on-site courses in all the municipalities involved in the project. We also set up some “Technological oases,” as we call them, places where citizens can go and access public computers, familiarize themselves with the tools we have developed and learn how to use them.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
We never did direct interviews with citizens. We receive some feedback concerning support and appreciation for our initiative.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
It's a very positive experience however we'd need to involve more people to improve our achievements.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
The degree of participation varies a lot between different services we offer. In general, we receive some positive feedback from citizens who find our services useful and time saving. We've also been in touch with other municipalities who asked about the details of our initiative in order to repeat our experience in their municipalities. We are very proud of this.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
Some municipalities are asking our help in developing similar initiatives.
ITALY
BILANCIO PARTECIPATO

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   Italia, Rome, Municipality RMXI

2. Size (population of locality):
   150.000 inhabitants

3. Title of initiative:
   Participatory Budget

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
   www.municipiopartecipato.it

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   Alfredo Cicchinelli

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   Coordinator

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   Phone: +39.06.696.11.451

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   info@municipiopartecipato.it

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words) this might be created by the analyst
   Bilancio Partecipato (Participatory Budget), is a new decision making process we are establishing. We are opening the decision making process of our municipality to all the citizens: we want to involve each single citizen directly in our activities.

   Very often citizens criticize how public money is spent. Thus we have decided to involve citizens in all the decision making steps regarding public investments in our municipality.

   Each citizen who lives in one of the areas of Rome in our municipality can become a spokesman and collect and express the ideas of others citizens in our council meetings. We serve 7 districts. Each district chooses its own representative who is invited to the municipal council meetings and collects the citizens’ requests.

   The municipality meetings are open to all citizens who wish to join. The issues we take into consideration in our meetings, where citizens are invited to express their needs, include: sports, urban development, road systems, the municipality’s services, cultural and sports event planning, actions to help youths, etc.
Thus the municipality can define the budget and how to spend it the following year, taking into account the real needs of the citizens.

The project’s website offers a forum area, mailing lists and a survey area to collect citizens’ feelings and opinions as well as to improve participation to our initiative by all means we can adopt.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
The initiative was pushed by the citizens who warmly asked for a more open decision making process. Thus the municipality has taken into account these needs and started to introduce this new system, which today works very well.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
Rome Municipality XI was the first in Italy to test such a new participatory decision making process. In other words, we did everything by ourselves.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The project was started in 2003. We were very impressed by the participatory budget of Porto Alegre, Brasil. Thus, having a strong demand from the population and having such an example to follow, we decided to initiate something similar.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
Participatory budgeting is closely related to the new municipality’s idea. Municipalities’ networks are testing participatory decision making processes in many cities across Italy. In our territory there are many active associations, groups and committees formed by citizens who collaborate with us in order to improve “direct democracy.”

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
Within the Municipality there is chairman who is responsible for participatory initiatives, an elected counselor, an internal office and we have an external project, lead by an association, which is in charge of external communication the overall project.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
The municipality has control over procedures and processes. The Bristol Association is responsible for the communication initiatives and the assembly management and planning. The e-democracy project is responsible for the website. Departments, councils and Rome municipalities help in securing funds for the initiatives. Citizens are responsible for the good working of the initiative with their active participation.
8. Were there any other key actors?
Citizens are the real key actors of the decision making process. Thus we don’t need any further partners.

9. How was the project financed?
It is funded with public money from the Municipality.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
The Bristol Association, together with universities and research institutes, made evaluations during the year to create a clear picture of the resources we are spending and of which we may need more. Thus everything is always supervised and we can plan the budget together with citizens in order to fund ourselves.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
We use internet and Mobile applications (SMS)

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighborhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
Every citizen, older than 14, who lives, studies or work in the area served by the municipality can take part to the meetings.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Working groups have decision making power on public works, roads, urban planning, green areas, mobility, cultural events, and youth assistance.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Each citizen served by our municipality has received a letter to announce the initiative. We put up posters in the crowded areas, wrote press releases for the local journals, made seminaries in the schools. We’ve also published books and videos and promoted conferences to let everyone to be aware of the initiative.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed?
Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political:
It’s hard for political institutions to accept that part of the decision-making power is also held by citizens.

15.ii. Financial:
Actually, citizens’ power on the overall budget is still limited as funds and human resources for this process are still inadequate.
15.iii. Technical:
Sometimes we see that the Italian bureaucracy and the relationship with public offices slow down the process and the benefits we try to grant our citizens.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
The project wants to bring everyone online and help them to interact as much as possible. Somewhat as a result, we focus mostly on youth participation.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
Citizens expect to be able to make decision regarding the future of their district.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
We have been able to involve citizens in the decision making process. Also, we have given a voice to those who have ideas on how to improve the districts and revitalize the area.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT’s, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
We register all the people who take part in the gathering of opinions and each citizen, at the end of the process, is requested to fill out an evaluation form about the process. This form contains important information for us about the citizens’ satisfaction and every year we produce a report about the goals achieved, the decisions made during the open assemblies, and the votes collected for each proposal. Thus we can prioritize each initiative in a very democratic way.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
We can say we have started a new trend in municipalities and some kind of different participatory budget initiatives are starting to take off.
ITALY
PROGETTO DEMOS.CT – CATANIA, SICILIA

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
Sicily, Municipality of Catania

2. Size (population of locality):
About 320,000 inhabitants

3. Title of initiative:
Progetto Demos.ct

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
www.comune.catania.gov.it

5. Name of interviewed expert:
The e-democracy “Demos.ct” manager and coordinator is Dr. Maurizio Consoli

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
ICT Division Director at Catania Municipality

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
Phone: +39.095 7422990

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
maurizio.consoli@comune.catania.it

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words) this might be created by the analyst
Demos.ct is a project that aims to help all the citizens in the municipal area to access services offered by the government using pre-existing ICT technologies.
We want to approach single individuals and actively involve them in the political activities performed by the local municipality. Also, we want to help all those citizens who are sight impaired to get closer to public activities as well as be able to listen to their experiences and feelings concerning our work.

The detailed objectives we are pursuing are:

- Publishing online the main issues on the municipal agenda which affect citizens’ lives and collecting impressions and opinions from all citizens before the town council discusses them. This is done through forums where citizens are invited to express their opinion which will be considered and analyzed during the town council.

- Allowing disabled and disadvantaged persons to get in touch and improve communication with the municipality. This also allows the municipality itself to learn and improve the services offered in order to include everyone in the municipality’s initiatives.
Thus, the two main focuses of the project are stimulating the participation in the municipality’s decision making processes and improving this participatory system including disabled people, encouraging their active role in shaping the municipality’s services and improvements.

Further we offer online services like the paying of fines, registration of births, marriage and death consultation, filing address changes, doctors’ lists, automobile certification procedures and many other services to facilitate citizens’ interaction with the government. We have also integrated Smart card authentication to provide a better and more efficient service to our citizens.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
The project was initiated by the Catania Municipality. The ICT division has taken into consideration an e-democracy initiative advertised on the National Gazette n. 86 (April 2003).

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)?
No, we started everything by ourselves without any further involvement by other governmental institutions.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The ICT development in our municipality was started in 2001. Soon after, we were given funds from the University and Research Ministry, which co-funded 2 projects to improve our ICT development.

These 2 projects laid the foundation for the next step, which consisted of e-government initiatives. The next project was called “Etna in Web” and it’s an e-government project. It consists of a web portal which offers some of the services offered by the Catania municipality online, allowing citizens to benefit from the municipality’s services directly from their homes using their computers and internet connections.

The “demos.ct” project was developed thanks to the e-democracy call published on the Official Gazette n. 86 (April 2004), which aimed at promoting the active participation of citizens, including the disadvantaged ones, in the municipalities’ activities to make the decision-making processes more transparent and to involve citizens in the decision making process as well.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
We are confident that this initiative can have further developments and improvements to increase the citizens’ participation in political life and decision making actions and also that we can be a future example for others. At the moment there are no other initiatives.
C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The responsible person for the project is Dr Maurizio Consoli, ICT department manager at the Catania Municipality.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
We have 2 main contributors and partners:
➢ CODACONS Sicily, an association which defends citizens’ and consumers’ rights which will be essential to create an obvious and clear interaction between citizens and institutions;
➢ Regional Council of the Italian Blind Union, which represents and cares about sight impaired people’s rights. This partner will have an important role to help blind and sight impaired citizens to participate actively.

8. Were there any other key actors?
No

9. How was the project financed?
The project was co-funded by the Innovation and Technologies Ministry and with internal funds.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
We plan to maintain the project with internal funds in future.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
We have developed an internet platform and we also use mobile technologies. We currently offer and have newsletters, mailing lists, a blog, an easy vocal system, and a GSM modem to send SMSs to the citizens.

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighborhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
We want to reach all the citizens in our area, including disabled citizens as well. We want to involve every citizen in the decision making process by means of new technologies.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Each citizen can express his/her own ideas and opinions regarding the municipality’s initiatives like urban planning, airport development, ecology matters, health and social initiatives, etc.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
First steps were taken by the major actors who were enthusiast of such a project. Their work and their enthusiasm comprised the first type of promotion. Afterward we promoted ourselves and our initiative online, with mailing list and press releases.
E. LESSONS (where relevant)

15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
We had to face initial skepticism among our political partners and some administrative personnel who considered the use of ICTs suitable only for internal procedures and not as a tool to improve communication and services between the municipality and its citizens.

15.ii. Financial
We havn’t had any major problems with this issue.

15.iii. Technical
We had no difficulties with this issue as well.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
We are still not very actively involved in this. Our major contribution is toward sight impaired people at the moment.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
We are not receiving feedback on this at this moment.

F. EVALUATION

18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
We are just at the beginning of the project and we are trying to involve as many citizens as we can in our decision making processes.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
The project is still ongoing and we value many users’ opinions. Thus we have identified some actions we will develop and discuss with partners. Chiefly, we are planning focus groups with political decision makers and collecting data and statistics on citizens’ satisfaction.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
Thanks to the measurements we have just described, we are considering further developing our initiatives in order to offer the best solutions to our citizens. Thus we will be able to verify citizens’ participation and involvement in decision making processes and allow everyone to express their evaluation of our work. The answers and feedback will be the basis for our future projects and will help measure the quality of the work we are doing.
A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
The initiative is currently driven in a hundred of Spanish municipalities.

2. Size (population of locality):
The size varies according with each case (including the smaller ones as well as bigger municipalities).

3. Title of initiative:
Until 2005, the title was ‘Ciudadanos2005.net,’ and since 2006, it has been known as ‘Ciudadanos2010.’

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Eva Campos

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Coordinator of Analysis and Participation

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
Phone: 91 359 26 00 7 // 600 90 50 23

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
eva@europapress.net

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

1. Brief description of the initiative
First ‘Ciudadanos2005.net’ and actually ‘Ciudadanos2010.net’ is a Project to promote citizen participation at the local level. The general idea is to reproduce the Greek agora as a space to debate and decide common proposals in a virtual environment. Political representatives, civil associations and citizenship make, support, discuss and refuse or approve proposals. The most supported can be discussed in the local council (pleno municipal).

Ciudadanos2010 is a platform that each municipality can use in his own way in terms of subjects proposed, period of discussion, etc.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
The initiative was started by Europa Press as an enterprise of information, communication, etc. that decided go on with their work promoting citizen participation with ICTs.
3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)

The initiative began in the village that showed interest in use the platform. It was a low cost development. The platform was built with economic support from the Industry, Tourism and Commerce Ministry (through then called PROFIT 2005) and several regional governments (Basque Country, Andalucía, Castilla y León, Castilla la Mancha and Aragón).

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?

It started in 2004.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?

The initiative is linked with other previous ICT initiatives:
- www.candidato2003.net
- congreso.candidato2004.net
- www.candidato2004.net

These three cases were platforms to improve interaction between candidates (before elections) or representatives and citizens.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE

6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?

Jaime Estévez –Director of New Projects at Europa Press. Then each initiative has their own politician responsible for each village.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?

'Ciudadanos2005.net' and ciudadanos 2010, works with three types of actors that can make, discuss, refuse and approve proposals:

1) Politicians
2) Associations
3) Citizens

In each municipality there is a local coordinator, which is the intermediary between the organizers of the project and the city council. Europa Press is responsible for the technical maintenance of and participation in the entire platform.

8. Were there any other key actors?

Citizenship, politician, associations

9. How was the project financed?

The platform was developed with economic support from the Industry, Tourism and Commerce Ministry (through then called PROFIT 2005) and then several regional governments -Basque Country, Andalucía, Castilla y León, Castilla la Mancha y Aragón- had financed specific developments to promote citizen participation in their region.
10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
The project is currently working and growing in the number of village using the platform.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Internet Platform (windows).

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
Every citizen in each municipality or the target group defined in some specific projects… it varies from one experience to another.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
The subjects are proposed by politicians, associations and citizens in each village.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
- in local media
- where the regional government supported public information campaigns. In some cases these courses were oriented to housewives, older people, young people, etc.

E. LESSONS
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed?
Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
They found huge differences among politicians: First, some were very active in own participation and their attempts to promote participation by others; Second, some presented their own proposals or discussed citizen proposals only from time to time; Third, some were mostly inactive and decided to be included in the project but then did not do anything to participate.

15.ii. Financial
None

15.iii. Technical
None

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
In the majority of the cases with good intentions but little technical means.
17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
The most important expectation from citizens is a bigger compromise from their political representatives in light of citizen participation.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
The general outcome is very positive but also has to be underlined with some controversial conclusions like:

- Internet is a media of participation for people predisposed and interested in such processes.
- A large number of politicians have low internet skills themselves.
- Not in all cases is citizen participation considered a democratic possibility (beyond elections).
- In some cases, citizen proposals are neither mature nor good for the community.

However:

- When people are motivated, they will in fact use internet to communicate about politics.
- An important segment of the population –internet users- are active participants in their community when they have the ability to participate.
- Some people seem uninterested but when subsequently motivated become active participants (i.e young people).

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT’s, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
None.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
None (the original idea is growing and beginning to include more villages).
A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   Jun

2. Size (population of locality):
   2161 inhabitants

3. Title of initiative:
   Pueblo Digital (Digital Village)

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
   www.jun.es

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   Jose Antonio Rodriguez Salas

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   Mayor

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   (34) 609100385

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   alcalde@ayuntamientojun.org

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Brief description of the initiative
   The M-Administration is a local initiative that seeks to put citizens and government in
   the same level of interaction. In the beginning, the aim was to connect citizens and
   government by PC. In the end, the project has relied on mobile phones (almost all
   citizens have mobile phones) to connect citizens and the government to resolve
   administrative procedures. The Digital Village is not only a specific initiative but also
   a global project which includes e-administration (developing procedures on line) as
   well as e-democracy (electronic voting, consultations, etc).

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil
   servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down
   (e.g. local government)?
   Jun's government. In particular, the current Mayor that was in charge of information
   society development under a previous government.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that
   were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional,
   national or international actor)
   No.
4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
It began in 1995 but it was the 28th of December 1999 when the universal access to internet for all citizens of Jun was declared. Originally, it was established as basic service. Since then, the government has developed a lot of particular initiatives.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
Active tele-democracy in Jun is part of a global project that interacts with other projects or important initiatives worldwide, as Global City Dialogues or Tele-cities. The village participates in the most important international forums of e-democracy.

B. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The deputy mayor, since the project has run from 1995 to 2005.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
ICT enterprises, multinationals, general directors. They participated by giving support funds and consultancy over the development of the initiatives.

8. Were there any other key actors?
The population.

9. How was the project financed?
It was financed by partners. Because they were pioneers in this kind of initiative, they had agreements with international ICT enterprises interested in developing it.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
It is a global idea; the government is carrying on new possibilities.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
From the first connections by WIFI 802.11B and G in 1999; webTV; Wimax; and the technology 3.5 G, the mobile phones that allow not only the citizen connection but also the retransmission of plenary sessions and the interactive participation proposing, for instance, subjects to discuss. Every citizen can connect with the government to resolve problems with the Plan de Intervención Urgente (Urgent Intervention Plan)

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
The general population.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Every subject can be discussed. There are not formal restrictions on participating or giving opinions in Jun. Citizens have access to all reports and information.
14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
By several means (municipal publicity), especially in the attempt to improve citizen understanding of the technology in use. There was a capitol of advanced e-administration.

E. LESSONS
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
Politicians in the Spanish state were not enthusiastic about the chance of the initiative’s success. For that reason, they had to obtain support and partners at the European level.

15.ii. Financial
They had to look for private support because they had no public support.

15.iii. Technical
They resolved the need for technical support by relying on computer engineering students, who were later incorporated fully into the project.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
The digital divide problem was resolved by ensuring universal access to the process.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives? Each demand is considered. For that reason, citizens are confident about the project.

E. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
In the last election, Jun used e-voting and was the village with highest participation (in relative terms). Jun has the highest levels of citizens using digital signatures or electronic means to participate in municipal life.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT’s, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
Citizen participation rates, citizen satisfaction, e-vote census, figures of participation in plenary sessions.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
Policia Net, P.I.U.M, INTERVILLE, guadalinfo, etc, etc.
SPAIN
MADRID PARTICIPA

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   Madrid

2. Size (population of locality):
   3,155,359 –But the experience was developed in a district with 136,227 people

3. Title of initiative:
   Madrid Participa

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
   http://www.munimadrid.es

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   Carlos González Esteban

   5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   Jefe del Departamento de Desarrollo de Nuevas Vías de Participación (Chief of the
   Department of Development of New Ways of Participation)

   5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   Ayuntamiento de Madrid
   Dpto. de Desarrollo de Nuevas Vías de Participacióón
   Bailén, 41-1º 28005 Madrid
   Tel.: 91 480 20 52 Fax: 91 480 20 03

   5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   gonzalezec@munimadrid.es

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

1. Brief description of the initiative

   Madrid Participa was the most important electronic consultation undertaken in Spain. The Madrid local government promoted a consultation exercise in the central district (one of various districts) which focused on citizen’s opinions on how to the improve quality of life in the city. Although there had been previous experiments, the Madrid Participa was on a much bigger scale (a potential population of 136,227 people) and with a number of participating channels –Internet, Java, mobile phones, SMS messages and on site centres.

   The questions that were posed to the citizens related to various topics of interest for the District:
   1. Which public infrastructures do you believe could be improved within the Central
District?
2. What is, in your opinion, the most important priority in order to improve the quality of life in the Central District?
3. Which activities would most contribute to energizing and revitalizing the Central District?

All of those above the age of 13 living in this district -with or without Spanish nationality- were eligible to participate. The registered participation rate was 882 votes (0.65% of the total electoral roll). Although the results of the consultation were not binding, the Mayor indicated that they would influence his decisions.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom_up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top_down (e.g. local government)?
The project was initiated principally by the private sector and with collaboration from the City Council. The following companies played a crucial role (Oracle, Telefonica, HP, Intel, etc.)

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
No.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The experiment was initiated in mid-2004 by private companies from the ICT sector who focused on the technical issues related to the electronic vote.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
Even though Madrid Participa was only a pilot project on e-democracy, the organizers tried to link it to the general question of improving democracy. Moreover, the Mayor promised to take into consideration the results of the consultation when formulating policy.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The City Council was responsible for the project.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
- Technological partners: provided a free technological platform, the organization of the consultation, as well as funds for the media campaign.
- Other partners: contributed to the tasks of communication and personal support to electors in the physical centres.

8. Were there any other key actors?
- National and international observers. They provided consultancy and technical as
well as managerial expertise for the design and implementation of the technological platform. Furthermore, they helped to design procedures for authenticating the vote and supervising the election process.
-Electoral Commission provided recommendations on the security and counting procedures for the electronic vote.
-Mass media: contributed by promoting the consultation.

9. How was the project financed?
The project was funded with financial contributions, equipment and technology from the companies from the ICT sector working on e-democracy and involved in the experience.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
It was a pilot project. After it was developed, a second consultation with a mixed voting channel (electronic and normal paper ballot) was undertaken. The general idea is to use this type of consultation for other areas and subjects.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE

11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
The following options were offered:
-Remote vote:
  -Mobil phone, with SMS
  - Mobil phone with Java
  -Internet (personal computer)
-Traditional vote:
  -Tablet PCs
  -personal computer

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
All the residents in the centre older than 16 years of every nationality (empadronados before 1/06/2004).

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
It was a consultation principally about urban planning and the environment as well as defining the general public policy priorities for the City Council.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Newspaper notes
Billborads, Posters
A TV spot on the Madrid metro
Flyers
Letters to residents

E. LESSONS
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
It was a first experience and there was discussion as to how to proceed with the most appropriate political strategy.

Another problem was how to overcome an expected low participation rate (which was not really resolved in the end).

To ensure the correct and safe operation of the electronic vote, which was open for 3 days.

15.ii. Financial
- It was not a problem because the project had the support of private enterprises.

15.iii. Technical
- Complexity of the multichannel technological platform. It was resolved positively.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
6 centres were established with personal support for citizens where they could register and vote. Also, a website was made available where citizens could obtain further information about the voting process.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
- The experience was evaluated positively by citizenship. 73.8% of participants agreed with the use of an electronic system of voting.
- Some citizens asked for a more open consultation, in which they could express their opinion on other subjects.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
882 participants took part in the initiative although the fact that only 0.65% of eligible voters participated out of a total electorate of 136,227 could be considered disappointing.

According to the survey that was carried out (see report at www.madridparticipa.org):
- Participants valued very positively the need for this kind of Citizen Consultation, although they were especially critical of the questions posed and the response options provided.
- The possible future coexistence of traditional and electronic voting systems proved to be an option which gained considerable support among those surveyed.
- The technology used in the Citizen Consultation was valued highly by citizens, especially in terms of the speed, simplicity and security of the voting process.
- Income level and age were one of the main determining elements of greater or lesser
support for generalized electronic voting systems; those surveyed who were over the age of 45 preferred the traditional system, as well as those interviewed whose income level was below 1,200 euros per month.

- The participation in electoral processes does not prove to be an incentive for a greater predisposition towards the acceptance of ICT, and it does not confirm the supposed mobilizing effect either.
- Half of those surveyed decisively favoured the use of electronic systems for the electoral process, whether for Citizen Consultations similar to MadridParticipa or for binding elections. Only 15% of those surveyed indicated reluctance to their use in binding elections.

From a socio-legal perspective, the following aspects can be highlighted:

- The participation of foreigners and young people deserves a positive appraisal because it contributes to the promotion of civic participation, which was one of the problems identified in the district.
- Given the fact that these experiences are quite new, it is especially important to design a subsequent media and information campaign that encourages participation and offers the necessary elements to take part in the Consultation. The City Council sent a personalized letter to all citizens to this effect.
- The existence of an important digital divide, that is, the presence of citizens with scarce technological habits, meant that it was necessary to set up onsite centres strategically located (markets, neighborhood associations, elderly centres) as well as multiple voting channels, including the popular ones, and especially the easily accessible but technologically questionable SMS message.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?

- Participation rates
- A sociological survey of those who participated (see report www.madridparticipa.es)
- The general confidence, security and usability of the technological platform.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
A similar citizen consultation for another Madrid district (Huerta de la Salud, for residents around Parque Huerta de la Salud, Hortaleza district)
A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
Canton of Vaud

2. Size (population of locality):
about 650'000

3. Title of initiative:
e-consultation for new legislation on the political-administrative division of the canton

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
http://www.dinf.vd.ch/decter/index.html

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Philippe Anhorn

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Secrétaire général du Département des infrastructures

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
Secrétaire général
Département des infrastructures du Canton de Vaud
10, pl. de la Riponne
CH - 1014 Lausanne
Tél. +41 21 316 70 03
Fax +41 21 316 70 34

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
philippe.anhorn@vd.ch

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words) this might be created by the analyst
With the entry into force of a new Constitution in 2003, the cantonal government was impelled to come up with a new division of electoral constituencies and administrative services (DECTER project). To this effect, it launched a broad consultation procedure among interested parties, organisations and citizens. For the first time, respondents could express their opinion on two government proposals over the internet, in addition to the traditional postal means.

2. Who initiated the project and when? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
The management for the DECTER project lied in the hands of a governmental committee, presided by two government ministers (Département des infrastructures et Département des institutions et des relations extérieures).

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)?
An expert committee (commission d’accompagnement COMAC) was created out of communal authorities, prefects, representatives of political parties and well as academics, in particular a team from the Inter-Chôros lab of the EPFL.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The DECTER project started in 2004. After lengthy deliberations and several meetings, the expert committee (COMAC) submitted its report with four variants to the cantonal government in April 2005. The consultation procedure with a governmental project with 2 variants was then opened in July and lasted until the end of September.

5. Did this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
no

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The cantonal government.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
The consultation procedure was under the supervision of the secretary general form the Department of infrastructure, but was practically organised by the team from the Inter-Chôros lab, which was in charge of technical and organisational matters.

8. Were there any other key actors?
Two political scientists from IDHEAP were associated to the analysis of the consultation responses as well as in the drafting of the final report for the government.

9. How was the project financed?
By internal resources of the public administration

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
none

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Internet platform
12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
All potentially interested parties, i.e. local authorities, political parties, various organisations and individuals.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
New political-administrative division of the canton.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
A mailing was sent to local authorities, political parties and other organisations, a press conference was organised and several press releases were delivered during the consultation process.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
none

15.ii. Financial
none

15.iii. Technical
none

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
This issue was not specifically addressed in this project. However, free-access computers with internet connections are now being installed in decentralised offices.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
E-government solutions are foremost a strong will of governmental authorities (mainly for cost reducing reasons) rather than an expressed demand of citizens.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
A legislative proposal was subsequently approved by the cantonal parliament, partly thanks to the participative consultation approach, in which the internet opportunity played an important part.
19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT’s, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
Out of 469 written responses in the consultation procedure, more than a third (164) were completed on-line.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
The DECTER project will lead to the complete reorganisation of decentralised offices in various domains of public administration. More specifically for the e-consultation, and thanks to the very positive reactions to the on-line form, more cantonal consultation procedures will be organised with the possibility of additional electronic means in the future.
A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
Anières, Geneva (followed by 4 communal votes in Cologny, Carouge, Meyrin, and subsequently by a vote on a federal ballot in selected communes of the canton of Geneva)

2. Size (population of locality):
1163 registered voters in Anières in 2003

3. Title of initiative:
E-voting in ballot votes (direct democratic vote)

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
http://www.geneve.ch/evoting/

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Michel Chevallier

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Secrétaire adjoint
Chancellerie d'Etat, Genève

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
Tél. 022 327 20 49
Fax 022 327 04 11

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
michel.chevallier@etat.ge.ch

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words) this might be created by the analyst
The very first e-vote in Geneva was organised back in January 2003 in the commune of Anières. Internet voting is a two-faced voting method: it is both a remote voting way and an electronic voting way, that is a dematerialised process. Voters are enabled to express their vote decision on a communal issue over an internet platform. The eBallot box locking and opening takes place in the presence of controllers appointed by the political parties and acting as an electoral commission would.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
The eVoting project was born in the year 2000, when the cantonal Chancellor began reflecting on eGovernment issues. That same year, the federal parliament invited the central government to study the ICT implementation in the institutional life and to the
democratic process. The project developed in Geneva has henceforth been endorsed by the Confederation, benefiting both parties.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
The canton of Geneva was financially supported by the Confederation and benefited from the know-how and counsels dispensed by a supervising federal committee, while the Confederation and the federal committee took advantage of the new developments taking place in Geneva for their own e-government initiatives. More concretely, the mayor of Anières was at the same time the head of election service of the canton, which explains why Anières was chosen in the first place.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The eVoting project was born in the year 2000 and the first e-vote took place in 2003.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
Internet voting does not replace the current voting ways, postal voting and polling station, it is a third possibility given to the citizens to express their will.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The operational responsibility for the e-voting project lied with the cantonal chancellery of Geneva.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
The federal Chancellery offered counselling and paid for the technical development, in which two private companies were involved, too (HP and Wisekey)

8. Were there any other key actors?
A private company assured a help-desk service during the voting period.

9. How was the project financed?
80% of the technical development was paid by the Confederation, whereas the remaining costs were taken care of by the canton. The overall budget was about 3mio CHF, out of which 1.75 mio. were paid by the confederation. The remaining costs concern external expertise (337000), the organisation of the ballot (550000), voting cards and licences (37500), as well as promotion costs.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
This was a pilot project, so the goal lied in experimentation. Today, a legislative proposal will soon be submitted to the cantonal Parliament, potentially paving the way for permanently allowing for e-voting.
D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE

11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Since e-voting could not be left to the private sector, the State of Geneva owns the on-line voting application. The application was developed by the State’s Centre of information technologies (CTI) with two private companies operating in the canton, Hewlett-Packard (HP) and Wisekey. The application has been developed on the basis of the conditions given in the tender issued by the State in 2001. The Geneva eVoting solution is not a proprietary solution, and its code has been audited by State’s experts and is made available to the citizens.

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
Since this was a pilot project, the objectives about it were rather unfocussed in terms of target groups. In other words, the project was more a technical challenge than a means to reach a specific target group. It was about testing the technical feasibility and acceptance by the involved persons and organisations. In principle, the initiative was naturally aimed at the whole electorate.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
The particular issue in Anières was an optional referendum against a local spending decision for a building, already passed by the communal Parliament.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Besides an information evening in the town hall, a small brochure was sent out to all households in Anières. Also, a computer was made available in the communal administration building, where a person was at the disposal of the citizens wishing to use the on-line voting system. A help-desk could be reached by telephone during the whole voting period.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
Since this was a first, the interest of politically involved parties was immense and the participation by the public high. However, it was clear that this initial euphoria wouldn't emerge again in latter projects. While there was considerable interest from other communes to be associated to the pilot project, there were almost no reactions from cantonal political actors.

15.ii. Financial
The pilot project was too small to really be able to draw some relevant conclusions, in particular with regard to economies of scale.
15.iii. Technical
Technical hurdles were mastered, but there was a misprogramming for shutting down the e-vote-server too early before the opening of the physical polls (on Saturday). At a later stage, there was a problem with pop-up windows (on which the application was based) and Windows service pack 2, but this problem was tackled successfully as well in the later e-vote projects.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
Not specifically except for the pc which was a the service of interested voters in the town hall, together with an accompanying person.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
There were several tests to have the site's ergonomical appearance evaluated by the wider public before the first e-vote, most notably during a two weeks periode in the passports renewal office (only place with only registered voters).

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
The pilot project proved that e-voting was no longer a hypothetical possibility but a practical alternative to postal and booth voting. The general acceptance of this new means was be far bigger than expected, as was the international (media) response with several reports by, among others, CNN and the New York Times.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT’s, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
A questionnaire was submitted to all e-voters, appearing after people successfully cast their e-vote. Besides, several intensive debriefings took place among all involved computer engineers and also among the whole project crew.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
There were three more communal e-votes in the canton of Geneva, namely in Cologny, Carouge and Meyrin, and thereafter also a vote on a federal issue in some selected communes. While the initial e-participation was very high, this high level could not be maintained in the subsequent projects, even though the projects coordinators sent out a reminder brochure to all voters in the case of Cologny. Some technical improvements were implemented as well (most notably the absence of pop-up windows), but the same e-vote system (for the voters) remained in place ever since Anières.

Right now, a legislative proposal will be submitted to the cantonal Parliament, aiming at amending the current law on political rights for allowing to introduce e-voting on a permanent basis.
A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
Smartvote was for the first time used in the federal elections 2003, and subsequently applied to 24 Swiss elections overall (e.g. in the cantons of SG, TG, ZH, as well as in the cities of St.Gallen, Geneva). The system was also used for the elections of a symbolic cultural minister (several cultural associations; kulturministerium.ch), as well as at the University of Bern, and lately in the national elections in Bulgaria (parliamentary elections in 2005)

2. Size (population of locality):
Several locations, mainly bigger Swiss cantons and cities

3. Title of initiative:
smartvote:
an online-voting help in national, cantonal and local elections in Switzerland

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
http://www.smartvote.ch/

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Jan Fivaz

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Vice-president of the smartvote-association (Verein)

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
smartvote
Postfach 834
3000 Bern 9

+41 (0)31 534 70 67

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
jan.fivaz@smartvote.ch

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words) this might be created by the analyst
smartvote is an online-voting help in the prevoting stages of an election that allows for a comparative assessment of the candidates on the basis of a questionnaire. All candidates are treated equally since only their replies to a pre-defined series of questions are allowed as voting help (fairness idea). More precisely, smartvote contacts all relevant party secretariats and asks them to submit a complete list of all their elections candidates. Smartvote then creates a complete database of all candidate in the election, and contacts the candidates in order for them to log in on a website
and to answer a (always identical) series of questions relevant to the election (decided upon by smartvote). Smartvote itself does not directly involve e-voting.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
Smartvote was initiated by the association (Verein) polittools.net This association of five childhood friends consisted of political scientists, economists and computer engineers. All initiators are volunteers and are mainly employed at different universities.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)?
no, since there was scepticism because of the political nature of the project

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The project was initiated before the national elections in Switzerland in November 2003.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
Two other initiatives can be mentioned:
Parteienkompass – is a educational tool (civic learning) for bringing political parties closer to students at different levels. Includes a website with a lot of information
e-voting project at the University of Bern, where smartvote took over the project management of the whole election (including the programming of the internet voting tool)

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE
6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The overall responsibility in an association lies with the president and its vice-president. There is also a treasury secretary.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
At the start, there was only volunteer work, but since 2004 there were always a host of contacts with local media (newspapers, radio, TV). Sun sponsored two servers, which are hosted at the University of Bern. Some visual support comes from sotomo from the University of Zürich, and scientific support from the edc-centre in Geneva.

8. Were there any other key actors?
Key actors are of course the election candidates, which participate in high numbers (between 60-75%). Candidates with no electronic access have the possibility to hand in their answers on paper as well.
9. How was the project financed?
At the beginning, smartvote asked small contributions from each candidate in the election (CHF 60), but as of 2004 media partnerships financed the project (typically CHF 5000 in a cantonal election). But basically this remains volunteer work.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
Smartvote is trying to find sustainable sponsors, probably not from public actors, but from foundations or a business company. Another possibility is the international expansion with a foreign partner (e.g. EU).

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
open source, linux server, mysql, php4 and 5; this is only internet-based

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
All potential voters, in particular young and first voters which do not yet have a constant voting behaviour, but of course open to everybody taking part in election

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
smartvote only applies to elections, but plans for extending it to ballot votes in policy issues exist

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Normally newspaper and other media channels function as partners (thus there are articles and reports), but sometimes flyers are distributed. The main promotion is through mouth to mouth propaganda.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
There were no bigger problems, sometimes there is some critique regarding the selected questions, but this voting help enjoys almost always a very high acceptance rate

15.ii. Financial
The main problem certainly is financial in that the project lacks a durable financial basis.

15.iii. Technical
All technical problems could be addressed.
16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
This project is about civic engagement, but the money lacks to extend this issue.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
Extensive consultations are conducted before the questionnaire goes online, thus these expectations are addressed.

**F. EVALUATION**

18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
The quality of the voting decision can be substantively improved, more candidates are considered, meaning that the horizon for potential voting decisions is enlarged, this representing an improvement of the democratic process as a whole since there is a bigger choice. Political accountability is improved, since the process is more transparent.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
The participation of candidates is rather high (on average about 65%), and it is estimated that around 20% of all voters that actually participate consult smartvote prior to an election. The system is constantly subject to review.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
Several in the pipeline, but lack of money.
A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   UK

2. Size (population of locality):
   Varies from one area to the next

3. Title of initiative:
   BBC Action Network

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
   http://www.bbc.co.uk/actionnetwork/

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   Martin Vogel

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   Leader of the Action Network Project

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   BC4D6
   Broadcast Centre
   201 Wood Lane
   London W12 7TP
   020 8008 5381

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   martin.vogel@bbc.co.uk

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words) this might be created by the analyst

   Action Network is a tool that is designed to help you change something in your local area. This can be by putting you in touch with people who feel the same way you do so together you can get something done, or by providing you with the information and advice you'll need to help you change your local area for the better. Action Network provides you with the means to write articles about issues that matter to you in your local area or organise an online campaign yourself so that you, too, can start making a difference to your community. It targets people who do not normally participate. It also enables local council(ors) by giving them new insights into local issues that may not have appeared through traditional communication channels.
2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?

The project grew from a review of political participation that was undertaken by the BBC after the low turnout in the 2001 General Election. The survey found that many of the people who do not vote are not apathetic, but care passionately about issues which affect them and have show evidence of involvement in civic life. Research found that many people who might be inclined to take action simply did not know where to start, or believe they can’t make a difference on their own. Action Network is designed to help overcome these obstacles.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
No.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
The project was initiated in April 2002.

It was launched 18 months later. The development process involved: ethnographic research into the difficulties people facing trying to act in civic life; interaction and technical design; editorial research and content production; technical development and deployment.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
The initiative is part of the BBC’s broad democratic purpose – which is to support informed citizenship. The Action Network team at the BBC maintains close relationships with broadcast programmes, and plays a role in developing on-air portrayal of the kinds of grassroots issues that Action Network users put on the agenda.

It also tries to work closely with other initiatives in e-democracy – e.g. Pledgebank, the National Project for Local e-Democracy, etc.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE

6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
I had immediate responsibility for the project. I’m a BBC employee, with a background in journalism, strategy, business development and new media projects.

Since the project was a joint initiative between two divisions. I reported formally to the head of BBC News Interactive, and informally to the head of BBC New Media.
7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
Various parts of the BBC – e.g.
- BBC Nations & Regions, who conducted broadcast trials alongside the launch of the Action Network website. These trials focussed on reporting grassroots stories on-air as a means to raise the profile of the Action Network site.
- BBC News website, which provides contextual promotion to Action Network every day from relevant news stories.

We also worked with the National Project in four locations, to promote Action Network as a means of addressing local civic concerns.

8. Were there any other key actors?
BBC News marketing developed a trail for Action Network which has run over two promotional campaigns on BBC television networks.

9. How was the project financed?
From television licence fee funds.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
The project has been running for three years and funding will fall by approximately 50% next financial year. We are currently reviewing the status of the project with a view to sustaining the initiative either in its current or a revised form.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
The Action Network uses internet-based software.

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
Citizens who are disaffected with mainstream politics but nonetheless engaged with civic affairs and minded to participate.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
This is left open to users (within given rules). The website is not for campaigning or other political activity, and should not be used for commercial ventures. http://www.bbc.co.uk/dna/ actionnetwork/actionnetworkrules

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Action Network has used a range of promotional activity. This has included:
- Television adverts on BBC channels
- Editorial partnerships with broadcast programmes and other BBC websites
- Action Week (with BBC News Interactive, Breakfast and Five Live)
- Workshops and outreach
- Press releases


E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
- 

15.ii. Financial
- 

15.iii. Technical
- 

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
- 

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
- 

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
Growing community of users turning to Action Network to address issues of civic concern. Audience approaching 250,000 per month.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT’s, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
Reach
Registered users
Outcome
Qualitative indicators of value for users

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
We’re looking at how to develop the proposition, with less of an emphasis on our providing authoring tools and more of an orientation to what people are doing in civic life with internet tools readily to hand – e.g. blogs, photo-sharing etc.
A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
All 646 Parliamentary Constituencies in the UK

2. Size (population of locality):
60m – 17,751 people signed up so far.

3. Title of initiative:
HearFromYourMP.com

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):
HearFromYourMP.com

5. Name of interviewed expert:
Tom Steinberg

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
Director, mySociety.org

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
+44 7811 082158
Skype: steiny0r

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
team@mysociety.org

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words) this might be created by the analyst
HearFromYourMP.com builds relationships between MPs and constituents in an open, constructive fashion. Only six months old HearFromYourMP has already attracted over 17 thousand constituent subscribers who want a more direct, open form of communication about local issues with their representative in parliament, and their neighbours. 49 MPs have already made use of the service at least once (about 1 in 5 of those asked so far), making HearFromYourMP probably one of the fastest adopted new communications technologies in the history of parliament.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
mySociety – a project based on a registered charity, UKCOD.
3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)

ODPM who provided e-innovations funding, and MPs who have used the system in an individual capacity.

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
November 2005. The idea was one of the winners of the late 2003 mySociety call for proposals.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
It is carefully cross-sold from other mySociety sites like TheyWorkForYou.com and WriteToThem.com. The guiding principal is to offer users who have expressed an interest in one service the easy ability to sign up to another.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE

6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
The trustees of UKCOD, the charity that runs mySociety had most of the legal responsibility. The day to day management responsibility lay with the director, Tom Steinberg.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
mySociety volunteers, who helped us debug and evolve the system, plus friendly MPs.

8. Were there any other key actors?
The public!

9. How was the project financed?
ODPM e-innovations funding.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
mySociety is developing a business plan to generate sustainable revenue streams from spin-off versions of our sites elsewhere, for example HearFromYourCouncillor:

http://www.mysociety.co.uk/hearfromyourcouncillor/

We are also continuing to pursue sources of philanthropic and foundation funding.

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE

11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Web, email, apache, linux, perl, PostGresQL
12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
The entire UK population.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
All topics are covered – popular topics have included the smoking ban, the environment, plus numerous locality specific issues.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Press releases, cross selling from other mySociety sites.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
MPs will use technologies that allow a form of two way dialogue if it is sensibly managed, easy to use, and has a clear benefit to them.

15.ii. Financial
Building sites at a national scale that have local sub-levels achieves enormously greater economies of scale than building purely local sites.

15.iii. Technical
Open source development platforms help keep costs to a minimum.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
44% of people using sister site WriteToThem.com tell us that they have never contacted an elected representative before. A large proportion of subscribers to HearFromYourMP.com come via this site, so we believe it to be a non-usual suspects demographic.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
That their details are protected.
That they are not spammed by MPs with not chance of reply.
That the system will be highly usable and easy to perceive value in.
That the system will show no signs of partisanship.
**F. EVALUATION**

18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
The total number of signers, and the number of MPs who have actively made use of the system.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?
Full evaluation will not happen until the project is one year old, this coming November 2006. We will seek to outsource the evaluation to an independent academic group, and we will let them decide what counts as value adding for the public and representatives, and whether we have achieved it.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?
The project has been copied and launched in Germany by Politik Digital:

http://www.sie-schreiben-dir.de/site/index.php

Plus, the decision to develop HearFromYourCouncillor as a product for the local government market.
UNITED KINGDOM
SWINDON MICRO-DEMOCRACY

A. GENERAL INFORMATION
1. Place (name of locality, region, municipality):
   Swindon

2. Size (population of locality):
   180,000

3. Title of initiative:
   Swindon Micro-Democracy

4. URL/address of website (where relevant):

5. Name of interviewed expert:
   Alan Winchcombe

5.i. Function of interviewed expert:
   Electoral and e Democracy Manager

5.ii. Contact details of expert:
   Alan Winchcombe
   Electoral and e Democracy Manager
   Law and Democratic Services
   Swindon Borough Council
   Civic Offices
   Euclid Street
   Swindon. SN1 2JH

5.iv. Email of interviewed expert:
   AWinchcombe@swindon.gov.uk

B. DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE
1. Provide a brief description of the initiative (200-300 words)  this might be created by the analyst
   There is a need to strengthen the relationship between local government and the citizen. Whilst considerable effort has been made in developing and piloting e-voting solutions less progress has been made in e-participation.

   The Micro Democracy project focused on being able to simply and cheaply engage with very small, possibly tiny communities – micro communities, so that the people engaged can see that their voice will be heard. It is far easier to be engaged about an issue if it is happening in your locality. The name Micro Democracy developed from a view that people are more likely to engage within their micro community where things affect them immediately. Micro Democracy is an additional consultation tool to existing quantitative and qualitative methods already employed by local authorities.
The Micro Democracy project is concerned with improving the flow of democratic information and the means of communication available to citizens. Its objective is to explore ways in which information and consultation can respond to individual concerns and ways in which citizens can be enabled to raise their own concerns within the formal processes of the local authority.

2. Who initiated the project? (Type of actor: political leader, citizens, civil servant, private sector) and was it bottom-up (i.e. citizen initiated) or top-down (e.g. local government)?
   The project arose from a discussion between local politicians, senior officers and software suppliers reviewing e voting and the need to engage with local communities.

3. Were there any other government bodies outside of the local authority that were involved in the project initiation (e.g. other local authority, regional, national or international actor)
   The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister via the Local e Democracy National Project

4. When was it initiated? How was it developed from the initial idea?
   It was originally conceived in early 2004 and first became operative in August 2004. It developed through a series of meetings with of the local authority – both councillors and officers - the ODPM and a software supplier.

5. How does this initiative relate to other democracy initiatives in the area (both online and offline)?
   The project was part of one of the work streams within the Local E Democracy project. It was used locally to supplement other forms of more general consultation used by the local authority. It was also seen as a tool to keep local residents engaged with the local authority between elections.

C. MANAGEMENT OF INITIATIVE

6. Who had overall responsibility for the project (position etc, and type of actor, e.g. elected politician, civil servant, activist etc)?
   Overall responsibility is with a senior officer of the local authority with responsibility for the authority’s e democracy agenda. The project is over-seen by an elected member who is the e Government Champion for the authority.

7. What partners were involved and what were their roles?
   Apart from the local authority, the only partner involved was the software supplier who developed the application software.

8. Were there any other key actors?
   A key goal of Micro democracy is to allow authorities to better manage their consultation spending in order to demonstrate both a reduced cost per consultation undertaken and a better return in terms of responses.

Micro democracy looks to help develop the relationship between citizen and authority by focusing on the immediate and local concerns of the citizen. People are used to being treated like individuals by business and retailers. They are beginning to grow
used to being treated as individuals by authorities in matters relating to service delivery. Micro democracy looks to extend that to issues of policy and engagement.

9. How was the project financed?
Finance for the development of the project was provided by funds from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister through the Local E Democracy Project National Project Board. Day to day running expenses were funded by the local authority.

10. What plans are there for sustainability/follow up?
Further development is required to make the application totally fit for roll out. The software supplier is currently working on this aspect. Annual running costs are low – less than £5k pa

D. FOCUS OF INITIATIVE
11. What technologies were used? (e.g. platform internet, mobile telephone, interactive digital TV)
Micro Democracy is a primarily an internet based application. It could be developed as a telephony based process as well.

12. What was the target group for the initiative (e.g. a neighbourhood, a particular group of citizens etc)?
The target groups were either individual citizens or small communities either geographically based or interest based.

13. What policy issues were the subject of the initiative? (e.g. budget, consultation on urban planning, environment etc)
Consultations have been undertaken on planning and transportation, corporate governance and education issues.

14. How was participation in the initiative promoted? (e.g. press release, direct mailing, political or personal campaigning etc)
Initial participation was promoted via a direct mailing which sought to capture the email addresses of volunteer participants. After capturing the email address all participation was by email. Where the participant did not have email, direct mail was used.

E. LESSONS (where relevant)
15. What problems did the initiative encounter (e.g. central/regional government support, finance, legal and technical barriers etc) and how were these addressed? Please answer in relation to the following:

15.i. Political
The local politicians supported the initiative. They did not always necessarily agree with or want to accept the responses from participants.
15.ii. Financial
The development costs were provided by the ODPM. The initial planned budget was reduced by 20% on implementation and this affected the ability of the project to develop all aspects of the initial project brief.

The on going running costs are relatively small – less than £5k pa – excluding officer time. The Council has a commitment to deliver e democracy and provides a budget to do so.

15.iii. Technical
There were some initial technical issues which caused problems in the early stages of the project. Once these had been overcome the application did not encounter any technical issues using standard application software development tools and internet protocols. It was simple to use from both the ‘users’ perspective and the responders.

16. How did the local government address the digital divide issue (i.e. citizens access to the relevant technologies)? Were any specific measures introduced to incorporate/include particular social groups?
For those volunteers who wanted to participate but did not have access to the internet or an e mail address, they were consulted using paper questionnaires sent by mail. In areas of particular social deprivation, a higher number of participants were sought.

17. What (if any) are the demands/expectations from citizens for such initiatives?
Citizens expect to receive feedback from the consultations. This is a fundamental component of the Micro Democracy process

Citizens expect to be told what the Council has decided to do or not to do and why that decision was taken.

F. EVALUATION
18. What were the main achievements of initiatives?
Benefits to Citizens
Micro Democracy empowers individuals and small communities about immediate local issues they care about. The focus is on local issues and personal engagement. In particular the following benefits are seen as key elements of Micro Democracy:
Relevance and Localisation.
People do care about their community. However the range of that community rarely matches the boundaries of the local authority. Micro Democracy aims to ensure that people are consulted about what matters to them.
Direct Feedback.
A criticism levelled at some authorities is that “you ask our opinion but never take any notice…”. The Micro Democracy emphasis on feedback aims to ensure that those consulted see a direct and timely response to their opinions.
Delivered through the channel of choice.
An important facet of the Micro Democracy project is that it recognises that not everyone wants to deal with their local authority over the internet. Respondents will are able to initially choose from either postal and Internet channels.
Benefits to Authority
Improved and more constructive engagement at the very local level helps to encourage community cohesion and demonstrates the relevance and responsiveness of local government in delivering appropriate, effective and worthwhile services to the community.

Value for Money.

MicroDemocracy may demonstrate value for money in the following ways.
- Firstly, by improving the level of responses to consultation exercises, it shows a significantly reduced cost per response.
- Secondly, by establishing a standard framework and respondent base, the overheads sometimes associated with individual surveys can also be avoided.

More Timely Engagement.

By establishing a routine two-way communication channel the authority can quickly respond to new consultation needs without budgeting, design and contract each time.

Additional Channel for Communication.

Some local authorities spend considerable amounts on communication and information policies. Even with substantial expenditure on commercial advertising through local newspapers and radio, leaflet and poster campaigns some citizens still complain of lack of communication. MicroDemocracy, through the feedback mechanism, offers a targeted and timely additional communications channel to those citizens who elect to be consulted via Microdemocracy.

Benefits to Councillors

One of the main groups to benefit from the development of a highly targeted and responsive consultation toolkit such as MicroDemocracy is Councillors. The ability to focus engagement at a specially targeted audience, such as a ward or part of a ward, and to engage in a two-way dialogue in a timely manner provides members with a capability that previously would have placed significant demands on their time and workload.

This is well demonstrated by the Member eChampion who had a real need to conduct a focused and swift consultation within his ward in regard to an upcoming planning decision and used the toolkit for this purpose.

Wider Benefits.

Beyond the immediate benefits outlined above for both the citizen and the authority a further range of benefits may underpin the project.

Developing Democratic Engagement.

Citizens are far more likely to hold and express an opinion with regard to issues close to home such as planning applications, bus routes and local schools than about authority wide issues. By consulting with citizens at this local level and building a habit of engagement, in effect “building democratic muscle”, MicroDemocracy can help in part to redress the democratic deficit.

Encouraging Community Cohesion.

Significant effort is given to building and strengthening the sense of community across our authorities. Much of this effort is focused very much at the local level, a few streets, an estate or a village. MicroDemocracy can help enhance this through demonstrating closely targeted consultation aimed at better understanding the needs and issues for those communities.

Supporting Partnerships.

Because MicroDemocracy is a web based application users can be supported from outside the local authority network. This may allow partners such as Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships and even local Head teachers to have access to a cost effective and responsive consultation tool. By
supporting a more encompassing body of users the authority reinforces its role as a central co-ordinator for all local issues and a community leader.

19. What criteria have been used to evaluate the initiative (e.g. degree of participation and access to ICT's, responsiveness of decision-makers, citizen satisfaction, etc.)?

There is a high degree and quick level of response to online questionnaires. Up to 70% response rates within 48 hours. This enables quicker decision making and feedback. The level of participants has remained relatively constant avoiding the need to continually update the respondents’ database. As people move home, they take their email address with them so that they still receive communications.

It is quick and easy to develop and despatch a consultation questionnaire.

20. What initiatives are emerging as a result of this one?

None at the present time
After a thorough review of local e-democracy practices in the United States, ten different types of e-democracy initiative are apparent. Each one is described in detail below. What must be noted from this evidence is the following. While there are examples of government bodies using the Internet to enhance the decision-making process by enlisting citizen input, the vast majority of examples are of governments making their decision-making processes more transparent. This fits with the general American attitude toward democratic participation, which is that once candidates are elected, unless there are glaring failures of judgment on their part, most citizens do not want to be bothered with political decisions.

Also, most citizens are quite uninvolved with politics at the municipal level. This is probably because there are hardly any deeply divisive issues at this level, with some important exceptions. In other words, the divisive politics happen at higher levels where the governments have greater power and bigger budgets. Thus there is little reason for a municipal website to offer more than the digitalization of the services it offers to its citizens. The result is that most municipal websites are simply compendiums of forms that can be filled out online. While at the State level, and even more so at the Federal level, government websites offer more information for the political consumer.

That said, it is also important to note that the most common type of e-democracy initiative, webcasting, is found at both the State and Municipal levels in abundance. It seems that citizens have a desire to be able to monitor governmental activity yet not to participate, emphasizing the delegative role of a system of representative democracy.

The 10 Types of Initiatives

1) E-INITIATIVE (1): In Colorado, at the State level, it is possible to initiate a state-wide referendum via email. This is not to say that all stages of the full process, including signature gathering, appearing before a committee to defend the proposal, etc., can be carried out online. However, it is significant that the first stages have the potential to be completed online. Specifically, this means that a citizen may send the draft of the proposed ballot initiative to Director of the State Legislative Council Staff for initial review by and feedback from a committee.

2) ONLINE PURCHASING (1): The interaction between business and government is a part of a functioning democracy is too frequently overlooked. Through fieldwork, an example of e-democracy in this particular relationship has been identified. In one city in Florida, it is possible for government contractors to file an e-bid for a government contract. This is a significant step in the incorporation of ICTs into local government as online bidding is handled by a private company but is subsequently much more transparent as there is a very clear and open paper trail to the bidding process. As such, this is not a mere tool of e-government, but as a result of the transparency it brings, it is a tool of e-democracy.
3) INTERACTION (2): Forums of interaction allow citizens and incorporated entities to interact with government decision-makers online. In both of these examples, citizens have the opportunity to address specific questions to their state governor and receive a response. This is a truly innovative idea since it is virtually impossible for a regular citizen to book time for a direct meeting with the governor due to their typically busy schedules. That governors would take time to openly answer questions posed by members of their constituency is a possibility thanks only to the advances in ICTs. Furthermore, in the case of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in California, his Question and Answer Session is not only live, meaning citizens get to watch their governor answer questions posed directly by citizens, but it is available in a podcast, which means that citizens can download a digital video of the session, watch it at their leisure, and reproduce it if they want. Not only does this directly involve citizens with the governing process but moreover, it creates a level of accountability that has never existed before, opening the chief administrative officer to criticism and questioning publicly by his constituency from the comfort of each of their own homes.

4) BLOG (3): A weblog, or ‘blog,’ is something like an online diary or journal that is meant to be read by many others. It is a way for an individual or a group to keep interested users updated with information. In the US political landscape, people first began to realize the potential of blogging during the last Presidential Election. More recently, bloggers uncovered false reporting in a CBS report by well-respected reported Dan Rather. Apparently, some elected officials are paying attention. In three examples, all at the municipal level, city mayors have begun to keep blogs of their daily activities. This is a novel use of new technologies to bring leadership closer to the people as citizens can read about the Mayor’s day and thus become more educated about the true status quo of the city and also have a greater monitoring capacity over the chief executive of their city.

5) E-BUDGETING (3): While almost invariably the legislative branch of any government in the US at any level is in charge of making the budget, recent uses of ICTs have allowed citizens to have an impact on the process. In one example, the entire State of Florida’s budget is itemized and made available online for citizen review. This lacks the major advantage of the other two, which is the possibility of direct feedback on the budget. In the second two examples, both at the municipal level, citizens are invited to either fill out a survey or ask questions by filling out a pre-made form both of which are then evaluated by government officials. Spending is one of the most important elements of a democratic government to be monitored and also one of the most notoriously difficult. In this way then, these three examples show how innovative government agencies in the US are using the internet to not only allow for greater transparency, but also to actively seek feedback about the functioning of the government. The latter highlights how the power of the Internet and ICTs can be used to maximally utilize the inherent potential of democratic societies.

6) DISCUSSION FORUM (3): These examples, while not actually run by the governments themselves, show how the internet can increase local political dialogue. Each example is on the municipal level and provides a virtual agora where citizens can discuss issues that are important to their local community. This falls specifically under the third tier of our working definition of e-democracy: “improving the quality of opinion formation by opening new spaces of information and deliberation.”
especially interesting example, citizens of New York City were able to debate potential uses for the former World Trade Center site in Manhattan. In another, more typically small-town-America, example, citizens can raise issues about the development of and events in a city in Minnesota. Furthermore, this site includes the innovative feature of consolidating various personal blogs written by local residents into one page, much like an RSS aggregator.

7) PERSONALIZATION (3): There were three examples of personalization of governmental websites in the states and major cities surveyed. In each case (the city of DelRay Beach, FL; The State of Colorado; and the State of Utah), an attempt is underway, although it is important to note that the projects tend to refer to themselves as ‘unfolding’, to facilitate the use of the website by allowing personalization, in much the same way as a news website offers users the option of pre-filtering news to the users’ preferences. In essence, this creates a new, virtual relationship between the citizen (or any legally corporated entity in theory) which is qualitatively more than a simply automation of a pre-existing relationship. In other words, this innovation makes government much more practical for the constituency.

8) CITIZEN FEEDBACK (7): What sets this type of initiative apart from interaction is that the target, an elected official, is not really expected to respond. For instance, you are allowed to send comments to the mayor of Corpus Christi, a city in Texas, or you are allowed to give recommendations to the Governor of Alaska, but there is really no promise that they will ever get back to you. Thus, it is important that representative democracies use the Internet as a tool to help representatives communicate with their constituencies. Nonetheless, this type of initiative is a step in the right direction in that it harnesses the power of ICTs to gain input from the plurality of opinions that exist within an open democracy. It is also interesting to note that this form of citizen feedback was evident, based on the cases chosen, from the small municipal level (a small town in New York) to the State level (Alaska and Utah).

9) TRACK LEGISLATION (7): To be able to track legislation only 5 years ago required a trip to the physical place where that legislation was being considered. With the advent of ICTs, many legislatures have begun to facilitate this process. It is not becoming quite common to find that legislative websites at both the State and the municipal level are equipped with information not only about every bill that is currently being debated but about all bills either decided upon or still on the table for any particular legislative session. To be able to monitor the activity of the legislative branch from any computer is quite a large step forward in the effort to reinvigorate open vigorous discussion in a democratic context. However, even this provision of information appears rudimentary in comparison to the most overwhelming e-democracy initiative in the United States.

10) WEBCASTING (27): If tracking legislation is an innovation in connecting citizen and government, webcasting is a revolution. There are two distinct types of webcasting that are taking place in local and regional US government.

The first kind is simple webcasting. This means that a State or municipal legislature records (either audio-visual or just audio) a session and then makes it available online. This is essentially the same thing as videotaping your democracy in action and
watching it or listening to it at your own convenience. If you are interested in an issue that is up for debate or voting that day in your city council or state legislature, you don’t have to skip work or wait until the next day to read a summarized version from a newspaper. You can watch it, either live or anytime after the debate has taken place. Never has being politically informed been easier. This type of webcasting takes place at the municipal as well as the State level and, while mostly offered by legislatures, there is one example of a chief administrator offering this service. The Mayor of Minneapolis, Minnesota offers periodic webcasts where he addresses his citizens directly about his current agenda.

However, even more interesting is a version of webcasting called RSS (Really Simple Syndication) or Podcasting. The major advantage of this form of webcasting is its automation. Citizens are automatically sent each new webcast as they are uploaded. In other words, if you would like, you can sign up for the podcast from the Texas State House of Representatives and come home every day after work and watch that particular session of your State Congress. Or, if you don’t want to watch it, you can get a transcript automatically sent to your RSS-reader every day. All you have to do is add it to a list of automatically monitored RSS feeds on your RSS-reader. It is, put simply, like getting Congress sent to your email every day. It should be noted that this initiative is only present on the State level so far in the United States.

While this type of technology does not bring the government and the people together in the same virtual room, it does allow the people the unprecedented power of staying fully and easily informed on a daily basis about what is going on in their local governments. In some instances, this is as easy as checking your email. It is difficult to imagine a technological innovation that could better-facilitate transparency and accountability.