

Digital Cities Summit From Virtual World to Human World

Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas
24-25 Setembro 2007

Towards an e-Participation Engine: Where People Take Place

Abstract

The usage of ICT to support the government's activities, allows the state to develop **new ways of interacting** with the citizens, permitting a new public commitment called **e-participation**.

This communication aims at pondering upon this new model of civic involvement and its contribution to improve the processes and the democratic structures, highlighting its **potential to improve the quality of democracy** itself.

Jorge Constantino

jorge.constantino@esg.ipsantarem.pt
Escola Superior de Gestão
Instituto Politécnico de Santarém

Luís Borges Gouveia

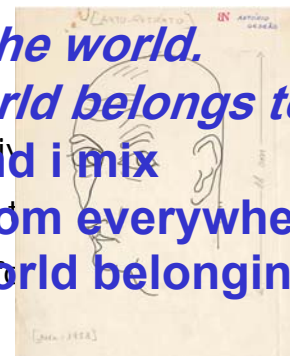
lmbg@ufp.pt
Faculdade de Ciência e Tecnologia
Universidade Fernando Pessoa

1

Towards an e-Participation Engine: Where People Take Place

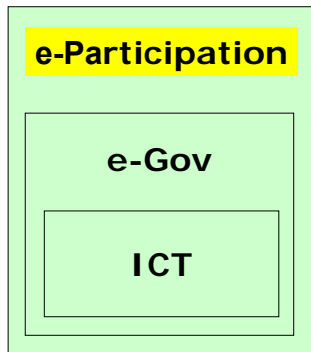
1. Introduction
2. Active citizenship
3. Restraints to an active
4. The globalization of
5. Participation and
6. Conclusions

*My village is the world.
The whole world belongs to
Here I meet and i mix
with people from everywhere
to the large world belonging*

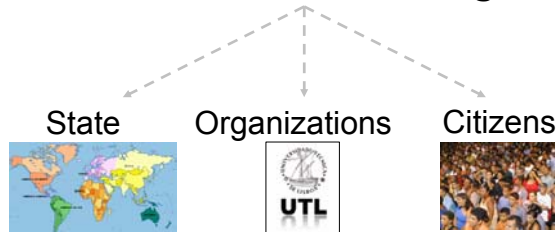


2

1. INTRODUCTION



New ways of communication among



Changes are not merely technological

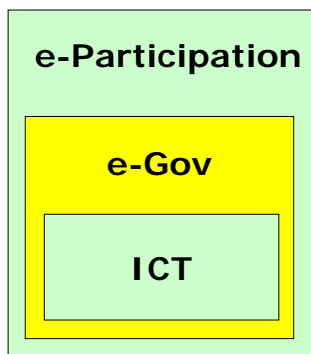
▶ New social and economic structures



▶ Emerging governing procedures →

3

1. INTRODUCTION



Emerging governing procedures

e-government

The central and local public administration on-line (mediated by electronic tools)

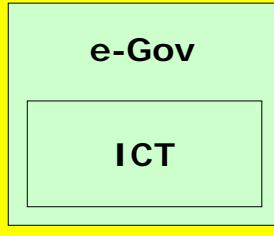
We hope

- More **efficiency** and **effectiveness** in the various State and AP levels
- **Less bureaucratic** public services, **centred on the citizens**

4

1. INTRODUCTION

e-Participation



Participation

Taking part in **joint activities**, for the purpose of **reaching a common goal**.

- ▶ Trivial: "**doing things together**"
- ▶ Management + Political Science: Evolves to **participation in decisions**

e - Participation

The field in which the **e-gov** intervenes, aiming at promoting a citizens' **active, inclusive and conscious** decision-making process

2. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Feeling of belonging to a community and participating in its life

cultural participation
(recreational associations,...)

community service
(volunteer work,...)

political participation
(voting, ...)

Reflects

The society's commitment to **building, applying and controlling** public policies, which means **influencing**, by any possible initiatives, those policies

2. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

political participation
(voting, ...)

Is part of **good governance**

(OECD)

The enforcement of the relationship with citizens

More and more demanding levels of active participation.

- an investment in a **better way of doing politics**: **Active participation**
- allowing to explore **new sources of ideas** of the citizens in the decision-making process;
- increase the **citizens' surveying** the public administration;
- promote the **quality of democracy**; **Information** the citizens about the different aspects of governance;
- **advance to the civic abilities** of the citizens.

Interaction's groups

7

3. RESTRAINTS TO AN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Realistic perspective

Evaluate the participation

- dimension
- diversity and quality
- social representation
- stimuli to promote (...)

- promote the **trust of the citizens** in their institutions

Portuguese case

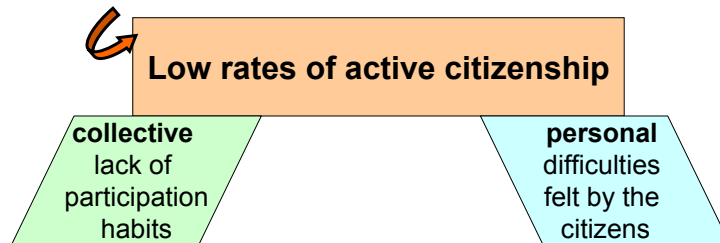
Low rate of active citizenship →

The economic, social and cultural rights

Political power organisation

8

3. RESTRAINTS TO AN ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



Critical factor for the success

- To free the citizens and the society from these constraints -

- Facilitate the **access** to the participation sites (physical access, flexi time and less time consuming activities);
- **Seducing** the citizens for that task;
- **Highlighting** and facilitating the **possibility** of participation;

4. THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE PARTICIPATION

PARTICIPATION: The world is not Flat !

- ▶ **Decline** of civic participation in many western democracies: **USA**, ... (Putnam, 2000)
- ▶ **Canada seems not** to have suffered from the sharp **decrease** of civic participation (Graham Longford, 2005)
- ▶ **Holland**: people **haven't lost** their **interest** on political issues - **they simply changed it...** (Poelmans, 2005)
- ▶ **Portugal**: despite the **low rates** of civic participation that have occurred so far, these **tend to rise slightly concerning youngsters** (Delicado, 2006)

10

4. THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE PARTICIPATION

United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000)

Compromise, within the scope of "Human Rights, Democracy and Good Governance" to work together to broaden the political issues, so that they may **allow an effective participation of all citizens** in all areas of their lives.

"My village is the world.
The whole world belongs to me."

As more and more...

The feeling of belonging to a given community doesn't prevent the feeling of belonging to another one from which, for everything going on around me, I'm responsible, no matter how far, or near, I am from the events.

Each citizen can **play more than one role** making his task **more demanding** and **more complex**.

World
EU
Country
City
Street

11

4. THE GLOBALIZATION OF THE PARTICIPATION



Portuguese case

A dynamic of local strong participation is not still ingrained

Within a framework of greater complexity, **the deficit of participation** acquires more visibility



The ideal of participative democracy may fall apart when facing a global participation.

What can we do?

12

5. PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY

We are living **e-time** !

e —

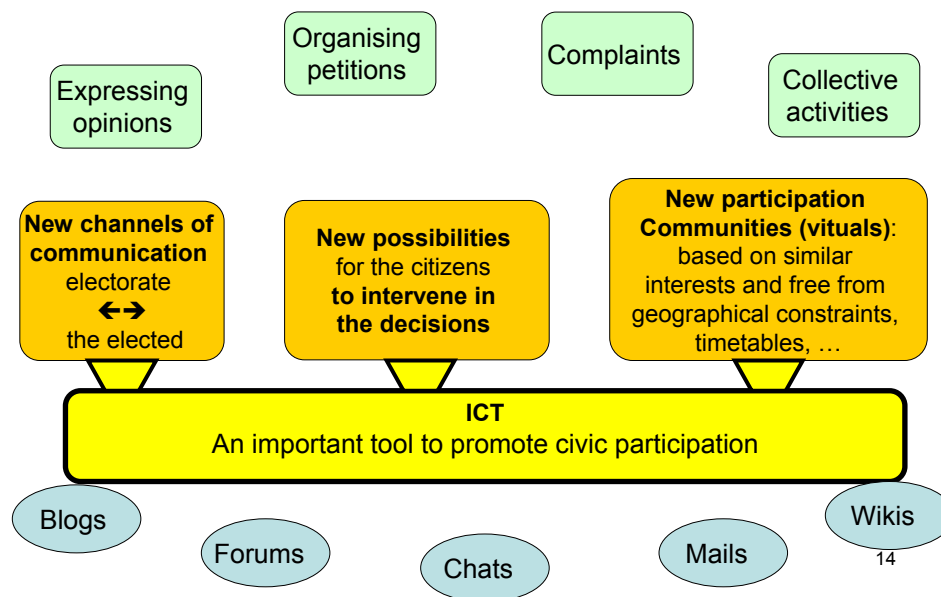
e-very concept must have an “e” to **look good**

It is important to understand **if and how** the ICT are changing the democratic systems ...

... **to avoid deceptions** that may arise from too many expectations

13

5. PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY



5. PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY

How the ICT affects the social capital ?

a. TRANSFORMATION

b. SUPPLEMENTARY

c. PRODUCING

Impact of new tools

Evolutionary (not revolutionary),

It results from an extensive negotiation among several forces:

established ↔ emerging,

fighting ↔ adhering,

...

The **recreational activities**

the attention of people who then

stay less available

for their community interests

(Quan-Haase & Wellman)

15

5. CONCLUSIONS

- a. **Changes** are not merely technological;
- b. Active **citizenship** is a part of good governance;
- c. It is important to **free the citizens from restraints** to an active citizenship;
- d. Each citizen can **play more than one role**, making his task **more demanding** and **more complex**;
- e. Impact of ICT is **Evolutionary**.

16

Digital Cities Summit From Virtual World to Human World
Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas
24-25 Setembro 2007

**Towards an e-Participation Engine:
Where People Take Place**

Jorge Constantino
jorge.constantino@esg.ipsantarem.pt
Escola Superior de Gestão
Instituto Politécnico de Santarém

Luís Borges Gouveia
lmbg@ufp.pt
Faculdade de Ciência e Tecnologia
Universidade Fernando Pessoa

17