The e-(R)evolution will not be funded

A transdisciplinary and critical analysis of the developments and troubles of EU-funded eParticipation

Pedro Prieto-Martín, Luis de Marcos, Jose Javier Martínez

Universidad de Alcalá (Spain)

Abstract: This article reflects, from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective, on the challenges surrounding the development of eParticipation in Europe, with special focus on EU programs. To this end, first, we assess the field's practical and theoretical achievements and limitations, and corroborate that the progress of eParticipation in the last decade has not been completely satisfactory in spite of the significant share of resources invested to support it. Second, we attempt to diagnose and shed light on some of the field's systemic problems and challenges which are responsible for this lack of development. The domain's maladies are grouped under tree main categories: (1) lack of a proper understanding and articulation with regard to the 'Participation' field; (2) eParticipation community's 'founding biases' around e-Government and academy; and (3) inadequacy of traditional Innovation Support Programmes to incentivize innovation in the eParticipation field. In the context of the 'Europe 2020 Strategy' and its flagship initiative "Innovation Union", the final section provides several recommendations which should contribute to enhance the effectiveness of future European eParticipation actions.

1. Setting the 'wider context': Public Participation in the 21st century

Leonardo Lisandro Guarcax serves as the head teacher of a primary school in Sololá, one of the poorest departments in Guatemala, with 95% of indigenous population. Since its foundation in 2001, he has also been the leader of the *'Sotz'il Jay'* –the 'House of the Bat'–, an indigenous Cultural Centre devoted to the research and promotion of pre-Columbian Mayan arts. By uniting ancestral forms of theatre, music, dance and Mayan spirituality, *Sotz'il Jay* has transcended previous folkloric approaches to create a new kind of "holistic performing art", which aims to convey a deeply political message: it vindicates the very existence, and the evolving vitality, of the Mayan culture (Thelen, 2008). In the last years Lisandro led *Sotz'il* to perform throughout Guatemala, as well as in Venezuela, Norway, France and several Central American countries. *Sotz'il Jay* is thus regarded as an important driving force for the revitalization of Mayan culture and consciousness (Thelen, 2010). Since 2008, *Sotz'il* has been directly cooperating with several municipalities in Sololá, using new media and arts training as a means to raise young people's awareness on subjects like political participation, gender equality, environmental sustainability and the Mayan worldviews (Sotz'il Jay, 2009). Last August 25th, just three days after the birth of his second child, on his way to work, Lisandro was forced by strangers into a car. Next morning, his lifeless body was found, showing signs of severe torture (Corcuera, 2010). Just turned 32, Lisandro has thus become a *'tat'* –a respected wise Mayan ancestor– who will continue to inspire and guide the paths of his folk. And indeed: his death sparked a civic outcry against violence and impunity in Guatemala, and his memory stirs up the work of a new generation of indigenous artists and leaders, which will maintain and re-generate Lisandro's legacy.

This sad and compelling story reminds us how 'citizen participation' –understood in the broad sense of 'engaging with public authorities to assist them in the development of policies that promote social justice'– continues to be a dangerous occupation in many of our modern democracies. In most countries however, and particularly in European liberal democracies, public participation turns out simply to be 'almost irrelevant': its practical use is so low that few citizens feel motivated to make any use of it. To comprehend why this happens, we need to consider that participatory arrangements have always played a subordinate role within representative democracies' decision-making mechanisms. Representative democracy, meanwhile, is best understood as a form of "thin democracy" (Barber, 1984), which does not rely much on citizens for

actual decision-making, except perhaps on election day. In fact, most historical moves toward democracy only took place in the face of significant social conflict and the treat of revolution (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2006). The case of the UK provides us with a very good example: the First and Second Reform Acts, which were passed in 1832 and 1867 and introduced wide-ranging changes to the electoral system, were indeed surrounded by mass political agitation. Earl Grey, the Prime Minister sponsoring the first reform, declared: "There is no-one more decided against annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and the [secret] ballot than I am. My object is not to favour, but to put an end to such hopes and projects… The principle of my reform is to prevent the necessity for revolution" (Acemoglu *et al.*, 2006). In the run-up to the 1867 Bill, Lord Salisbury –himself an expert in electoral statistics, who later served as Prime Minister for almost 14 years– stated: "The test by which a good Reform Bill may be distinguished from a bad one is that under it the working classes shall not now, or at any proximate period, command a majority in this House" (Osborne, 2006). These assertions serve to illustrate the intentions of democratic reforms' proponents: reforms are rarely devised as a way to bestow voice and power on the common people but to restrain their achievement. Democratic system's 'good behaviour' is secured by including in its institutional design some checks against the redistributive powers of majorities (Easterly, 2007) and by making sure that money can be spent to influence its performance through lobbying, bribery and corruption (Ferguson, 1987; Prieto-Martín, 2010, pp. 13-19). Although these Reform Acts initiated the gradual process of changes that would lead to the advent of modern democracy in the UK, in the short term they always favoured the interests of the elites over those of the common citizen. This is, in fact, the way in which peaceful 'political development' – understood as "an interactive, public decision-making and learning process, within and between government and civil society, based on power creation and dispersion" (Fisher, 1998, p. 21)– usually happens: political development is only achieved when an important share of the elites realises that it is in their own interest to progressively incorporate into decision-making some previously excluded groups, as a way to create the new forms of 'shared power' deemed necessary to cope with societal challenges.

And if this is the case for liberal democracy as a whole, it should come as no surprise that 'participatory mechanisms' were not really functional or relevant during the 20th century. Given the difficulty of sustaining autonomous forms of citizen participation, governments have exercised a quasi-monopoly on the citizen engagement avenues. Political representatives, precisely the actor less interested in developing independent and real citizen influence (Mahrer *et al.*, 2005; Verlet *et al.*, 2007), are in charge of promoting and channelling public participation. As a result, participatory mechanisms are typically conceived as a means to provide legitimacy for power-holders without really compromising their leeway and prerogatives to administer public resources. Participatory spaces are thus not usually shaped as special "deliberative arenas" sheltered from partisan politics, but as instruments that allow them to subtly bolster their political agendas (Cornwall *et al.*, 2006; Kadlec *et al.*, 2007). Even the most celebrated participatory practices, like the Brazilian Participatory Budgeting experiences, have been called into question because of their manipulative and instrumentalist essence (Prieto-Martín, 2010, pp. 56-66; Wampler, 2008).

It was against this gloomy backdrop for public participation that the first web browser –named *'WorldWideWeb'*– was created by Tim Berners-Lee at the end of 1990: the World Wide Web came into existence. As a result, the last 20 years have witnessed dramatic changes affecting most economic and social spheres: communications, education, finance, entertainment... became changed forever thanks to the integration of ICT. Strange as it may seem, politics stands as the field least impacted by the Internet, with representative institutions still closely resembling those established during the 19th century. But delay does not mean immunity: social computing and the extension of social networks are expected to have a profound impact on governmental institutions and practices in the next years (Punie *et al.*, 2009; van den Broek *et al.*, 2010). There is a widespread expectation of increased opportunities for citizens and businesses to participate in public decision-making using ICT. Consequently, the pressure on the public sector to prepare for these changes does nothing but grow, and official declarations in favour of transparency, open government and a culture of engagement succeed each other through the world. The recent 'Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment' stated, as a shared objective of EU countries, that by 2015:

> *"Citizens and businesses [will be] empowered by eGovernment services designed around users needs and developed in collaboration with third parties, as well as by increased access to public information, strengthened transparency and effective means for involvement of stakeholders in the policy process." (European Commission, 2009, p. 2)*

This declaration also set the base for a new *European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015* (European Commission, 2010b), whose first priority is precisely to promote 'user empowerment' and the collaborative production of innovative services. In this context, the question concerning the extent to which these intentions are being transformed into real changes, becomes very relevant: *How are ICT affecting the development of public participation in a region like Europe, which prides itself as a beacon of democracy and social and political rights? Is participation becoming any more effective thanks to the Internet?* During the last ten years, fruitful experimentation and research in the area of electronic Participation has been carried out in Europe, mostly funded by the EU (Panopoulou *et al.*, 2009). This paper critically reflects on the progress of eParticipation in the European context, with a special focus on EU projects and policies, aiming to identify and explain, beyond conventional thinking, the main reasons explaining the development and underdevelopments of the field. By analysing and articulating the evidence and the somehow counter-intuitive results obtained so far, our research draws some policy lessons which should orient the development of innovative policy approaches in the future.

The paper is organized as follows: section 2 aims to identify and examine the main achievements and limitations of EU programs in relation to the practice and theory of eParticipation, section 3 attempts to diagnose and illuminate some of its most pressing troubles and challenges, while section 4 provides some final recommendations which could contribute to enhance the effectiveness of future European eParticipation actions.

1.1.   Research Methods

To address this wide-ranging explanatory objective, our research design was based on grounded theory methods (Bryant *et al.* 2007). Grounded Theory is a qualitative research method that emphasizes triangulation among multiple data sets and fosters an iterative, comparative process of theory-building and explorative analysis-testing, in a context of theoretical and purposive sampling. It is especially suited to generate theories regarding social phenomena in domains without a dominant theory. By comparing data from a variety of settings, sources, and perspectives, this type of trans-disciplinary research aims to illuminate the complex interrelationships among political, legal, historical, social, economic and cultural elements (Muller *et al.* 2010), developing a higher level understanding that is "grounded" in, or derived from, a systematic analysis of data.

Our appraisal is thus based in the extensive analysis of distinct sources and datasets, which included:

1. The most recent reports, articles and literature reviews dealing with eParticipation research, practice and theory;
2. Documentation and data sources related to EU Innovation Support Programmes and their evaluation;
3. Data on more than a hundred EU-funded projects with some relation to the eParticipation field, mostly from FP5, FP6, FP7, eTen, INTERREG and CIP programmes (European Union 2011);
4. For some of the projects, especially those included in the eParticipation Preparatory Action and the ICT-PSP programme, an extensive analysis of projects' documentation was performed, which included brochures, newsletters, project websites, deliverables, evaluations and academic publications;
5. Research from other scientific domains, like economic theory, sociology, civic engagement and systems design, whose insights and theories could be applied to advance our research;
6. Direct examination, interaction and technical analysis of the eParticipation platforms developed as part of the projects;
7. Finally, the data employed in the analysis includes feedback on the preliminary findings collected from experts, practitioners, participants in EU-funded projects and EU officials involved with the Innovation Support Actions, in order to confirm and clarify emerging themes.

The iterative and purposive analysis of these data sources progressively engendered and substantiated the explicative theories that are presented in the 'assessment' and 'diagnosis' sections, as well as the recommendations included in the final 'treatment' section.

2. Assessment: the unsettling development of eParticipation in Europe

> "It scratches. And scratches a lot, and scratches very well.
> But it scratches where it doesn't itch" (Galeano, 1992)

eParticipation can be defined as the use of ICT to enable, broaden and deepen people's capacity to influence the decisions and get involved in the actions that affect their lives. Researchers have primarily associated eParticipation with political participation in democratic decision-making processes, and related it to people's capacity to connect with one another and with administration officials, elected representatives and public leaders. The transformative potential of eParticipation is being increasingly acknowledged by governments and international institutions, as illustrated by the ever growing attention that eParticipation receives in the UN e-Government reports (United Nations, 2008, 2010). The development of eParticipation is, however, proving to be harder and slower than expected (United Nations, 2007). Over the past years, many experiments have been carried out worldwide that intended to use ICT to strengthen democratic processes (Coleman *et al.*, 2009b; Peart *et al.*, 2007; Sasaki, 2010), but their overall impact has been quite modest. This is not surprising: many different challenges and barriers that hinder eParticipation's advances have been identified, including political, organizational, technological, legal, economic, social and cultural hurdles (CoE, 2009; Kubicek, 2007; Prieto-Martín, 2006b). To help to deal with these challenges, the EU has promoted several eParticipation programs as part of its research agenda. The 5th, 6th and 7th Framework Programmes, the 'eTEN' and the 'ICT-PSP' Programmes and the 'eParticipation Preparatory Action' have funded a significant number of eParticipation development, trial and deployment actions (Chrissafis *et al.*, 2010). Since year 2000, the EU has thus financed at least 76 projects in this field, whose total cost amounted to 190 million euros (European Union, 2011). These aimed to address very different goals at the local, regional, national and European levels, by applying various technologies and methodologies. As it is usual in EU funding programs, the execution of these projects was mostly channelled through consortiums, which were created ad hoc to implement each project and included governmental, academic and business partners coming from several EU countries. A Network of Excellence for eParticipation Research, DEMO-net[1], was established in 2006 with 6 million euros funding, and was later complemented with several research and evaluation studies, including the European eParticipation study[2], Momentum[3] and Crossroad[4], and with further initiatives to establish networks of eParticipation stakeholders and experts, like Pep-Net[5]. In addition to supporting pilot and demonstration projects, the overall aim of the EU programs was to strengthen and consolidate the eParticipation research landscape, bring together key stakeholders and enable a more structured cooperation. These general objectives have indeed been achieved: an active European scientific and practitioner community has emerged, which is made up of academia, governments and solution providers (Molinari, 2010) and actively exchanges ideas, practices and tools through informal networks as well as through personal relationships and joint projects. Several journals and international conferences are now devoted to eDemocracy and, more recently, important studies and reports have been published, aiming to disseminate eParticipation knowledge to political actors and the citizenry (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008; CoE, 2009; European eParticipation, 2009e).

2.1. Practical achievements of eParticipation actions

No systematic appraisal of the EU eParticipation actions, as a whole, has been performed so far. But a special evaluation effort was applied to the *eParticipation Preparatory Action*, a programme that supported 20 'real-life' trial projects at local, regional and national levels, between 2006 and 2010 (Bicking *et al.*, 2010; Chrissafis *et al.*, 2010; Momentum, 2010; Rambøll Management, 2008).. It is thus possible for us to depict its 'archetypal project' as follows (Momentum, 2010): it involved 7 different partners from 4 countries, including some academic, governmental and business partners. In some cases, NGOs or organizations with eDemocracy expertise were part of the consortium too. Each initiative typically tested its own technological and methodological approaches by means of 3 pilot projects that were executed in 3 different

---

[1] http://www.demo-net.org

[2] http://islab.uom.gr/eP

[3] http://www.ep-momentum.eu

[4] http://crossroad.epu.ntua.gr

[5] http://pep-net.eu

countries. These trials were devoted to one or various issues with some kind of 'transnational relevance', like waste management or smoking regulation, and often incorporated a mix of offline and online activities. The project focus was on experimentation rather than on supporting theoretical research. Development effort was limited, with most projects merely adapting or integrating several existing technologies, such as an open source CMS, data mining and a visualization tool, into a website. Each project lasted two years, had a medium cost of 715000 euros and paid special attention to promotion and dissemination actions like press releases, online activity, social networks and events organization. The number of participants was however very low compared to the expectations, with just 450 registered users that submitted around 1300 contributions (posts or signatures on petitions). The trials also failed to attract the interest of representatives and decision makers, and rarely had any measurable impact on the policy.

The evaluation reports mentioned above are unanimous in regarding the projects –as well as the whole Preparatory Action– as a success. And indeed the trials have supported wide-ranging practical experimentation and helped to improve some valuable open source eParticipation platforms (like Gov2OSS[6], Demos@work[7] and CitizenScape[8]). But a critical reading of the project deliverables and evaluations, as well as the direct interaction with the systems, does not paint such a flattering picture. Some recurring deficiencies in many of the trials suggest that there are systemic problems in place, which need to be honestly acknowledged and tackled in order to increase the effectiveness of future EU eParticipation programmes. Due to space limitation, in this 'assessment' section we will mention just some examples of the technical, organizational and evaluation issues, which will later serve as the basis for the 'diagnosis' section.

Project reports and deliverables claim that "state-of-the-art" technologies are being used, but the eParticipation systems were normally built upon tools and features that had already been available for several years, mostly as general purpose tools not specifically designed for eParticipation (Panopoulou *et al.*, 2010). Very short development cycles, multi-language pilots, and a failure to integrate 'agile' development methodologies made the systems error-prone, with many minor bugs reaching production (e.g.: not working hyperlinks, missing documents, issues with some browsers, obscure error messages, news section with no date-stamp, wrong or mixed translations, etc). The sites' layout and logical structure are often confusing for a casual visitor, especially when the project integrated different tools into one site. Web 2.0 mindset and tools (Chadwick, 2009), though often trumpeted in the project plans, have not been successfully integrated into the systems' design and into the participatory methodologies (CitizenScape, 2010a, p. 26). For example, the decision to pre-establish the discussion topics –taken by most of the eParticipation Preparatory Action projects– (CitizenScape, 2010c) clearly contradicts the most basic Web 2.0 notions. As a result of all this, the pilot websites look quite rigid and unappealing, lacking the friendliness of modern successful sites. Even in cases where an administrator keeps regularly posting updated information, the discussion or petition areas may seem to be non-operational when a 'critical mass' of participation is not achieved, as is frequently the case. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that few users make a real and continuous use of the sites: why should they be willing to invest their scarce time and energy in an unfriendly web, if it does not even clearly state how or even whether their participation will have any influence on the policies at hand? In many cases, indeed, the projects had not devised any process to ensure political impact. Moreover: getting familiar with a system, extending its user-base and building trust in a novel participatory avenue always takes time (CitizenScape, 2010b; De Cindio *et al.*, 2009). The very short period stipulated to complete all project's activities made it very hard to achieve those objectives. And hard becomes impossible when we recognize that each pilot is executed in a different country and the whole project is managed by a big international consortium, which needs to devote much energy to coordinate its work and to comply with the bureaucratic requirements associated to EU grants (European Commission, 2010a). Although the support action 'Momentum' was introduced to monitor and coordinate the projects and to consolidate their results, significant overlapping of the methods, concepts and tools tested by the projects couldn't be avoided (Ferro *et al.*, 2010).

It is also interesting to notice that project owners frequently stated accessibility levels that were not really attained (Bicking *et al.*, 2010; Momentum, 2010, p. 141-142). For example, for the FEED project an AAA level was claimed, but according to experts not even A level was reached. Considering that accessibility is

---

[6] http://www.gov2u.org/gov2DemOSS/index.htm

[7] http://www.demosatwork.org/

[8] http://citizenscape.org/

just one of the 69 requirements established for the FEED system –and actually: the one that is easiest to verify– (FEED, 2009) the following disturbing question arises: how many of the projects' planned requirements and aims were really completed? It is quite difficult to evaluate this kind of question, because many projects' deliverables are not available for public scrutiny. What is more: the project evaluations are frequently performed by the project managers, or are based on interviews and workshops attended by them. Reports thus tend to be rather shallow and self-indulgent, and disregard the examination of certain uncomfortable questions. For example, when measuring the achievements of the Ideal-EU project, the registered and active users at its 'Social Networking Platform' are counted, as well as the visits to the site (Ideal-EU, 2009); but no analysis is performed on the visits' high bounce rate (72%) or their very low permanence (less than two minutes), which could possibly indicate a failure of the platform to achieve its aims. In order to assess the user satisfaction, ease of use and the perceived utility of the systems, most projects relied on surveys applied to system users, which invariably showed reasonable satisfaction levels with the system's functionalities. It was not taken into account that such surveys are biased and do not show the real appreciation of the target users: in order to understand the systems' very low rate of participation, insights on the opinion of 'those who chose not to participate' would have been much more valuable. One final example is that, despite requests to "incorporate rigorous evaluation and cost-benefit analysis into all [eParticipation] implementation and research initiatives" (European eParticipation, 2009e) no report has ever mentioned the fact that, based on the data provided by 'Momentum' (2010, p. 145), the cost of each users' contribution (post or petition's signature) was around 550 euros. This figure is too high, especially when compared with other systems operated by non-governmental organizations, whose technical standards and operational efficiency tend to be much higher (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008, p. 72). Most of the trials were clearly conceived to last just as long as the funding lasted, and even if many projects included deliverables analysing its potential sustainability, we are afraid that –as in the case of former government-initiated eParticipation applications (Macintosh *et al.*, 2006a, p. 38)– the political and social impact, scalability and sustainability of these systems seems questionable.

To close this section, which assessed the practical achievements of eParticipation actions, it should be noted that subsequent EU's eParticipation calls, included under the ICT-PSP and FP7-ICT programs, continued with the trend we just showed. The calls' provisions and guiding principles have not changed much and, actually, most of the leading institutions behind the analysed projects are currently implementing projects under the new calls. Therefore, many of the aforementioned reflections maintain their validity for the present moment. Current projects pay indeed much more attention to scalability and attempt to take advantage of citizens' interactions in the existing social networking services –like Facebook– to support the policy formulation processes, instead of inviting them to visit government websites. But their organizational and institutional arrangements are essentially the same. The most visible difference would actually be the projects' size: the twelve projects approved in 2009 and 2010 have increased their average cost to 2964000 euros (European Union, 2011).

2.2.   Theoretical and academic achievements

eParticipation, understood in a broad sense as 'ICT-enhanced civic engagement that empowers citizens to influence political decisions', is considered a very dynamic and transformative area with an increasing capacity to disrupt existing power balances (van den Broek *et al.*, 2010, p. 11). In Europe it has also been regarded as an 'emerging research field'. As we mentioned before, in the last years several European initiatives, sponsored by the EU, the Council of Europe and European national governments, have contributed to the consolidation of this field as a scientific and research domain (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008; CoE, 2009; European eParticipation, 2009e; Panopoulou *et al.*, 2009, 2010). A big share of recent eParticipation research papers has been linked, in one way or another, to these initiatives and/or the eParticipation trials funded by the EU.

However, recently published literature reviews which analysed several hundreds of scientific articles related to eParticipation (Freschi *et al.*, 2009; Medaglia, 2007; Sæbø *et al.*, 2008; Sanford *et al.*, 2007) give us reasons for concern. They depict eParticipation as an incipient field still characterised by fragmentation and lack of common definitions, theories, methods and tools. Its research and reporting standards are quite low, with a large share of eParticipation research consisting of 'anecdotal' and speculative case studies, with little theoretical foundation and no comparative value. All relevant 'agendas' of eParticipation research (theoretical, methodological, normative, instrumental, technological, descriptive and evaluative

agendas) are reported to be underdeveloped. Despite the significant amount of public resources invested to support eParticipation trials and experiments, the field does not seem to have advanced as much as expected in the last years. Most initiatives apparently worked on their own to discover, once and again, a set of basic 'lessons learnt' that, in fact, should better have been the projects' starting point (Prieto-Martín, 2006b). Some examples of these lessons are: eParticipation should be analyzed in the context of other forms of participation; usability of the eParticipation websites as well as dedicated moderation of the sites are critical success factors; new media supplement traditional forms of participation rather than replacing them, and often reinforce the traditional patterns of participation; serious involvement of decision-makers throughout the participation process is a critical (and often missing) success factor; building trust with the citizens takes time; politicians are reluctant towards eParticipation; etc. (Freschi et al., 2009). Thus, to our knowledge, no real breakthrough or even any significant research milestone can be reported for the field (Sæbø *et al.*, 2008; Freschi *et al.*, 2009; Kubicek, 2010).

In an article that appraises the development of eParticipation over the last decade, Prof. Ann Macintosh and Prof. Stephen Coleman (2009), two renowned eParticipation scholars, reflect on what they call eParticipation 'research gaps'. Their aim is to identify the field's main challenges and barriers in order to establish future research directions. According to them, eParticipation research is suffering from being seriously under-theorised, with analysis often lacking critical distance and conceptual clarity. Some basic elements that would be required to consolidate eParticipation as a functional research field –like agreed definitions for eParticipation or a basic understanding of its dual nature as something that can be driven by administrations or by citizens themselves– are still missing. The paper also acknowledges an "institutional and political resistance to introduce, use and act on eParticipation applications", as well as frequent methodological shortcomings in the research designs that, all the same, tend to focus upon government initiatives and undervalue the importance of spontaneous participation driven by citizens, voluntary organisations and pressure groups. No clear demarcation has been established between the conduct of eParticipation and its study: the same team that designs, promotes and manages a project is often responsible for observing, researching and reporting on it. Traits like disinterestedness and critical distance –which are essential for researchers to question the political, technological and cultural assumptions upon which projects are based, as well as the empirical claims made by project managers, politicians, technology vendors, journalists and interest groups– are thus often missing. Nevertheless, the most pressing and important challenge of the field is the fragmentation and dispersion of research, which is considered responsible for triggering a number of other obstacles. This fragmentation is closely related to the interdisciplinary character of eParticipation, which has a very technical foundation but at the same time encompass mainly political, cultural and social implications. Consequently, its research is necessarily linked to a wide range of disciplines, like democratic theory, political science and communication, information and technology studies. But alas, literature reviews show that inter-disciplinarity is not really working: cross-fertilization between disciplines is still rare (Freschi *et al.*, 2009, p. 66) and works that refer several disciplines do not as much combine them, but gather them together. Even though all eParticipation researchers no doubt praise inter-disciplinarity, "paying more than lip service to interdisciplinary research" (Westholm *et al.*, 2007, p. 57) continues to be too hard a challenge.

It must be recognized that DEMO-Net, and in general the eParticipation scientific community, has done a hard work trying to establish methodological, analytical and theoretical frameworks for the field, as well as providing ontologies and evaluation models, which aim to guide research, design and practice (European eParticipation, 2009a; Lippa, 2008; Tambouris *et al.*, 2007; Westholm *et al.*, 2007). The fact is, though, that these frameworks are still too exploratory and it is difficult to apply them to 'real-world' initiatives (Aichholzer *et al.*, 2009; Ricciardi *et al.*, 2010). eParticipation research seems thus to be trapped in a kind of vicious cycle: since there are no truly functional eParticipation systems or experiences, it is very difficult to research empirically or to perform comparative analysis to test hypotheses; at the same time, the lack of clear concepts and theories means that experiences' and systems' designs are not adequate.

Propelled by the boom of social networks, the autonomous advances in eParticipation practice are speeding up, and eParticipation research and theory may soon not be able to keep pace with them (Handler *et al.*, 2008). Experts are increasingly conscious that the approaches used by governments for promoting and implementing eParticipation need to change, and are making different proposals as to what should be done (e.g.: Bannister, 2009; Bruns *et al.*, 2011; Chadwick, 2009; Charalabidis *et al.*, 2010; Hermida, 2010; Howe, 2009; Johnston, 2010; Linhart *et al.*, 2010; Maier *et al.*, 2010; Smith *et al.*, 2009). But the sole

willingness to reform, if not informed by a proper understanding of *'what went wrong and why'*, may very well leave the problems' root causes untouched. For this reason, the next section will present some institutional and holistic explanations that, in our view, partially account for the current situation and thus shed light on the best ways to move forward.

3. Diagnosis: Untying eParticipation troubles and challenges

"It is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer,
to treat everything as if it were a nail" (Maslow, 1966)

The previous assessment of eParticipation theory and practice suggests that some of the problems that have hampered its progress have a systemic, institutional and overarching character. Handling this kind of 'elephant in the room'-issue is always problematic, as their very existence tends to be denied because of their complexity or the embarrassment they cause and, as a result, they cannot be acknowledged or discussed, let alone get properly sorted out.

This 'diagnosis' section will concentrate on identifying and illuminating some of these *'relevant but unspoken'* eParticipation problems, as a way to complement and deepen the valuable reflections that were previously referred to (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008; European eParticipation, 2009e; Freschi *et al.*, 2009; Macintosh *et al.*, 2009). To enquire how these problems relate to each other and how they jointly contributed to lower the profile of eParticipation research and practice during the last years, the assumptions of eParticipation researchers, practitioners and promoters will need to be scrutinized and challenged. This task demands from us not only an inter-disciplinary and critical approach, but also a healthy dose of humorous irreverence. For that reason, we beg our readers, in advance, to excuse our impudence, and at best consider it as an essential tool in our quest for understanding.

3.1. The missing foundation of the e   research domain

As odd as it may sound, most problems of eParticipation's research and practice, as well as most of the paradoxes afflicting eParticipation as a scholarly domain, are ultimately related to a very special repeating decimal, whose relevance has not been sufficiently recognized, so far, by the eParticipation scientific community: $0,076923$.

This rational number expresses the mathematical relation existing between the 'e' and the 'Participation' portions of the term 'eParticipation', as measured by their amount of letters: one thirteenth. 1/13. This means that 92.9% of the domain's name corresponds to 'Participation', while the 'e' represents just a 7.1% of its extension.

Based on these figures, the natural expectation would be that eParticipation, as an academic domain, would maintain a close and privileged relationship with the Participation (or 'Civic Engagement') domain (Brodie *et al.*, 2009). In fact, it would make a lot of sense to consider eParticipation as a sub-domain of 'Civic & Political Engagement field'. A sub-domain which concentrates its research on those specific issues related to the utilization of ICT for participation, while relying upon the bigger, older and more developed domain for all the rest. This way, it would not be necessary to create for the field, from scratch, a whole corpus of concepts, theories, methods, evaluation approaches, etc. By accepting all knowledge on 'participation' as its own legacy and inspiration, the new field would not need to solve on its own issues that are probably better approached from the main field. After identifying its specific areas of competence –those where eParticipation can comparatively offer more value– a lot of creative cooperation and knowledge exchange between researchers and practitioners from the core 'Participation' field and the peripheral 'eParticipation' field would be easily attained.

Let's take, for example, the problem of 'fragmentation of research' that was mentioned previously as the main barrier for the domain. Inter-disciplinarity is clearly not a problem restricted to eParticipation, but rather an issue that has affected the whole Participation domain for decades. With the emergence of the World Wide Web and eParticipation, new ICT domains need to be added to this interdisciplinary landscape. Nobody doubts that ICT components are acquiring a critical relevance for the future development of the field. Public participation without an 'e' backing will soon become a 'contradiction in terms', as any credible participatory exercise will need to include some 'e(lectronic)' supporting infrastructure. Consequently, the eParticipation scholars' task of articulating these new ICT fields into the Participation domain is truly essential. But in order to accomplish this mission they clearly need to comprehend and leverage all

previously accrued knowledge about Participation and inter-disciplinarity. Ignoring all these advances would possibly lead to a disappointing situation like the one we described in the previous section.

Paradoxically enough, a critical analysis of last years' eParticipation experiences and literature reveals some kind of undeclared –and possibly unconscious– attempt to develop the eParticipation domain as if the "Citizen Participation" domain would not exist as such. From the moment it emerged, eParticipation was presented by its proponents as a new and eclectic research field that brings together a number of different disciplines, fields and research areas (Macintosh *et al.*, 2006a; Sæbø *et al.*, 2008), with frequent mentions to sociology, political sciences, law, information systems, psychology and other social sciences (Freschi *et al.*, 2009). In spite of this, 'Participation' or 'Civic Engagement' are very rarely mentioned as a pre-existing research field that requires special consideration. It could be argued that this kind of relation goes without saying, that it does not need to be explicitly mentioned. However, this seems dubious. In fact, the special connection between Participation and eParticipation should be one of the initial topics to be explicitly clarified in any attempt to establish eParticipation as a (sub-)research field. But no matter how many related fields are identified –Kubicek *et al.* (2007) mention 41 different disciplines as relevant for eParticipation– participation itself is never mentioned as an established research domain to be taken into account. It is indeed remarkable that the relationship of eParticipation with the e-Government domain is more frequently mentioned than the linkages with the Participation field. Article selection strategies used to perform literature reviews for the field are also revealing, as they tend to exclude any work on participation that do not include 'e-', 'electronic' or 'e-Government' attached to it, no matter how 'highly relevant' its reflections, theories and methods could be for the whole (e)Participation area (Freschi *et al.*, 2009; Sæbø *et al.*, 2008; Sanford *et al.*, 2007).

What is more: the weaknesses that literature reviews have repeatedly attributed to most eParticipation works –conceptual vagueness, dominance of descriptive approaches, lack of theoretically grounded contributions, etc.– are at best explained as resulting from a poor understanding of the problems and dynamics associated with traditional 'offline' Participation. Thus far, the most important theoretical influences in eParticipation literature came from political philosophy and political science, mainly referring to the Habermasian ideal of a deliberative public sphere and to some theories on democracy models (Macintosh *et al.*, 2009; Sanford *et al.*, 2007, p. 416). However, this kind of 'romanticized' and rudimentary understanding of participation has contributed to narrowing the debate and has burdened eParticipation research and practice with unrealistic assumptions (Chadwick, 2009), which are in turn partially responsible for the unsatisfactory results obtained so far.

The Participation field has indeed a lot of useful concepts, theories, methods, etc. that could benefit eParticipation researchers; but these understandings have so far been just partially and inconsistently transferred to the eParticipation literature (Sæbø *et al.*, 2008, p. 419). Most of the knowledge developed lately –in the areas of participatory processes' evaluation, typologies of public engagement mechanisms, or the critical appraisal of participatory governance schemas, to name but a few (Cornwall, 2008; Cornwall et al., 2008; Gaventa et al., 2010; NCDD, 2009; OECD, 2007; Parés et al., 2007a, b; Prieto-Martín, 2010; Pruitt et al., 2007; Rowe et al., 2005; Wampler, 2008)– have a direct application for the eParticipation domain, and cannot be neglected any longer. This need to reach out becomes even more apparent when one considers that the own European Union has been investing, as part of its 'Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH) Programme', a lot of resources to develop this field: within the last ten years at least 37 projects with direct relation to the (e)Participation field could be identified, with a total investment of around 74 million euros (European Union, 2011). It makes no sense that eParticipation scholars and practitioners keep trying to re-invent the field in isolation, ignoring these crucial advances.

3.2. The Founding Biases of a brave new domain

How could it be that the insights and expertise coming from such an adjacent and crucial domain have not been properly considered and leveraged by the eParticipation community, more than ten years after the first EU's eParticipation initiatives were launched? The most revealing explanation for this is the one that regards Innovation Support Programmes as 'path dependent' processes, much influenced by phenomena like institutional inertia and self-serving and self-reinforcing dynamics (Pierson, 2000; Sydow *et al.*, 2009). Path dependency means that choices made on the basis of transitory conditions can persist long after those conditions change. In order to understand the present situation it is thus necessary to pay attention to past conditions and choices, rather than simply looking at current conditions and preferences.

In regard to the eParticipation research field, it is critical to consider how its first seeds were sown and, equally important, by whom.

The first European eParticipation projects were started in the late nineties, long before terms like e-Democracy, eParticipation or Social Software became fashionable. These initiatives were mainly funded as part of EU's e-Government research agenda, which had a marked technical and academic character. Not surprisingly, the initial projects were thus implemented by scholars and companies that were formerly working in e-Government and e-Business fields, who already had experience of working in EU research programmes and were willing to transfer their knowledge and expertise to the incipient and promising 'e-Voting and e-Democracy' fields.

e-Government policy has for a long time been characterised by its focus on individualistic service delivery, a technocratic top-down approach, a proclivity towards system deployment without much previous theoretical reflection and a measurement strategy based on supply-side benchmarking of e-Services availability and sophistication (Verdegem *et al.*, 2010). e-Government has thus traditionally lacked the user-centricity and the broad understanding of governance (Zouridis *et al.*, 2003) that underlie eParticipation as a research field. And indeed, most of the institutions that first 'colonized' the eParticipation field had less knowledge and/or research experience in relation with the socio-political dimensions surrounding democratic and participatory practices, and were also lacking in connections with social movements, participation practitioners or elected representatives, the stakeholders more interested in benefiting from the incorporation of ICT into their participatory practices. The way in which "[e-Government and eParticipation initiatives] are implemented and the factors that might be used to evaluate their success should be significantly different. In this respect, e-government and e-democracy are incompatible processes that should be subject to very different strategies" (Pratchett, 2006). As eParticipation is "counter-cultural to the prevailing ethos in e-Government" (Scherer *et al.*, 2008), it is not surprising that most EU projects did not properly consider 'Participation' and its troubles: the social, political, organisational and technology issues associated with public engagement contexts were rarely integrated in an holistic view of the design, application and research of eParticipation technologies (Macintosh *et al.*, 2009, p. 9). Thus, European programmes were not able to promote a 'citizen-oriented / people-empowerment-centred' eParticipation. Instead, they adopted a 'government-oriented / tools-centred' approach which envisaged civil society as an "external factor" (European eParticipation, 2009e, p. 14), asymmetrically focused on government-driven eParticipation (Kubicek et al., 2007) and did not succeed in devising "analytical frameworks that took into account the values and preferences of the various stakeholders and civil society groups involved in eParticipation" (Freschi *et al.*, 2009).

The effect of these e-Governmental and academic *'founding biases'* was maintained, or even reinforced, over the years. The case of DEMO-net, the eParticipation "Network of Excellence" funded by the European Commission (EC), is quite revealing. DEMO-net operated between 2006 and 2009[9], aiming to strengthen the scientific, technological and social research excellence in the field, with respect to quality, efficiency, innovation and impact. Astoundingly, Civil Society and Citizens were not mentioned in DEMO-net's brochures and presentations as relevant actors/partners to be involved in the project (DEMO-net, 2006a, b). Renowned institutions or leading scholars in the field of Participation were also not explicitly considered nor included in the consortium. It seems that, in order to develop this nascent discipline, DEMO-net and the EC only perceived as necessary the cooperation between the usual suspects of e-Government: the academia (technical and socio-technical researchers) as well as government and industry specialists (Fraser, 2006).

In this way, European e-democracy experiments were typically "more aligned with the requests and requirements of formal political bodies than with those of citizens' and civil society organizations" (Maier *et al.*, 2010), even though these actors have shown their initiatives are more innovative, agile and mobilizing than top-down projects initiated by governments (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008). As Stephen Coleman expressed it in a speech: "If you would have asked me ten years ago, I would have said very firmly: 'we need government to take the lead in this area'. I now don't think that anymore. Cause I've watched government trying to do it. I take the view that the best initiatives always come from citizens themselves. And the best two things

---

[9] The project aimed to last one more year but was discontinued after a negative evaluation from the EC. It is worth mentioning, however, that no news or information about this cancellation can be found neither in DEMO-Net's or any of the EC's websites.

governments can do are: one, get out of the way; and two, give them some money... In reverse order" (Coleman, 2006).

Despite the increasingly perceived need to change the research approach and partners, the institutional inertia affecting innovation programmes made it very difficult to attend any call to align eParticipation research and funding with citizens and civil society needs (Prieto-Martín, 2006a). It has taken several years till projects like 'Crossroad' gain enough momentum as to propose essential changes in the ways 'ICT research in Electronic Governance' is conducted (Crossroad, 2010, 2011). *Crossroad* final deliverables overtly recognize, for example, that the current public support programmes do not match the rapidity of today's innovation processes, do not remunerate novel and risky ideas, do not take into account the citizen's (end-client) views, are too technology-led and tend to favour bigger and more experienced organisations rather than the best ideas and implementation. The aforementioned "Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment" recently called, similarly, for an "active collaboration with businesses, civil society and individual citizens in order to develop user-driven eGovernment services" (European Commission, 2009). It is thus becoming more and more clear that "traditional policy tools to stimulate public innovation do not work very well in the context of 2.0 public services" (Osimo, 2009), where innovation is very much bottom-up, emergent, design-driven, serendipitous and multidisciplinary.

This kind of problem not only affects eParticipation, but many other research fields. However, because of its multidisciplinary, nascent and disruptive nature, eParticipation arises as one of the fields that better exposes the limitations of the broad European innovation landscape. In fact, it is the entire European 'Research and Innovation Funding Programmes' which are currently being scrutinized as part of the 'Europe 2020 strategy'. The 'green paper' recently presented by the EC to launch the overhaul of its funding programmes openly recognizes that existing instruments are too complex, over-bureaucratic and lacking in transparency (European Commission, 2011a). It also acknowledges the limitations of collaborative networks of researchers "in achieving the necessary flexibility, creativity and cross-disciplinary research needed". On its part, the 7th Framework Programme interim evaluation recommends that the research agenda is set by Civil Society Actors for those areas mostly related to "society", like eParticipation (European Commission, 2010a). The next years will show to what extent this new awareness is translated into meaningful policy changes. Aiming to support this reflection process with practical observations, we now finalize this 'diagnosis' section by identifying some dynamics and characteristics of EU programs that, in our view, have contributed to lowering the profile of the eParticipation research field in the last years.

3.3. The horse and the cart, the stick or the carrot: framing (dis)incentives for digital civic innovation

In marketing, as with innovation policies, two basic approaches can be used to develop a 'market', namely push and pull strategies. Pull strategies attempt first to understand final users' characteristics and needs as a basis for tailoring the products to their necessities, and then try to motivate users to demand these products from the 'providers'. Push strategies, on the contrary, concentrate the incentives on distributors, stimulating them to provide users with the products that better suit the producer's interest. European innovation policies have traditionally followed this kind of top-down 'push strategy': the research aims and the range of expected results are established up-front, conditions to access the funding are determined, and thus a certain kind of participants -in most cases, established organizations with resources allocated to write proposals and cope with EU programs' bureaucratic requirements (Crossroad, 2011)– are commissioned to provide the research products, which are later fed to the final users.

But money is not the most relevant factor in order to promote web 2.0 and eParticipation initiatives. No matter how much public funding is made available, it will not stimulate innovation if it is not channelled in a way that is consistent with the research topic and with the objectives, motivations and the environment in which the domain's 'trendsetters' operate. Moreover, the availability of too much money could be counterproductive, as it often "attracts the wrong kind of applicants, the opportunists, and the consultants able to build any kind of project by paying lip service to the right buzzwords" (Osimo, 2009, p. 100). Hence the way in which monetary and non-monetary incentives are framed to align the stakeholders' efforts and to catalyse advancements is by far more important than "how much" funding is pooled.

As the previous assessment section evidenced, EU's mechanisms have not been very successful in attracting and incentivizing the assortment of projects and participants that would have been required to

boost innovation in the eParticipation field, despite having invested millions of euros. During the last decade, most government-driven eParticipation projects have typically shared several important weaknesses (Charalabidis *et al.*, 2010), like topics being distant from people's priorities, websites unknown to the general public, tools not appropriate, methodologies not scalable, usage much lower than expected, very limited impact, poor evaluation, unrealistic assumptions all-around, etc. The assessment section provided many examples of these kinds of generalized and systemic problems, which seem to derive from a severe inconsistency between the constraints established for the projects and the character of the field being supported. Important project characteristics, like the project size and duration, the multi-country consortium requirements, the kind of partners involved, the dispersedness of the trials, the pilot projects topics or the focus on "experimentation" that is disconnected from theoretical research, are better understood as an expression of EU programmes' idiosyncrasy than as a conscious attempt to optimise and align the program incentives with the state and characteristics of the eParticipation field.

Thus, the 'push strategy' dominated, and forced the 'cart to be put before the horse'. At the same time, several critical project dimensions –like the sustainability, scalability, replicability and comparability of the tools and experiences developed– were not properly considered, what in turn seriously hampered innovation and scientific progress in the field. For example, a common complain about eParticipation experiences is that they differ so much that it is very difficult to perform empirical and comparative research (Kubicek, 2010). This 'inherent difficulty' is worsened because of the soft spot EU programmes have for multi-country consortiums. These consortia frequently implement their pilot projects in distinct countries and, as a result, their topics, partners, methods, resources, etc., are all different. In many cases they diverge so much that even the comparison of trials within the same project becomes *"like comparing apples and oranges"* (Aichholzer *et al.*, 2009). The projects' short duration and the focus on initiatives and consortia that depend on the funding to remain operational prevent the projects from nurturing the trust and learning-processes that eParticipation requires to blossom (CitizenScape, 2010b; De Cindio *et al.*, 2009) and also make longitudinal research impossible (European eParticipation, 2009b).

Innovation in *'ICT for Governance'* fields –such as eParticipation– has been characterized as being demand- and user-driven, highly multidisciplinary, serendipitous and tightly amalgamated with research; all of them are characteristics which are "not always fully compatible with existing FP7 type of research" (Crossroad, 2011, p. 23). Attracting the best innovators and researchers for the field and motivating them to perform superbly requires funding programmes that provide them with appropriate lures and bridles. But the 'sticks and carrots' supplied by the existing mechanisms have not been framing incentives fittingly nor have been really attracting the right kind of innovators (Osimo, 2009).

eParticipation is certainly an area that would benefit especially from the involvement of creative 'activist-researchers', heartily committed to advance and develop their projects and the field *"no matter what"*, even if this means setting aside their own personal interests. But current funding programmes appeal more to scholars and to a kind of 'consultant-researchers'. As analysed in the assessment section, project managers in EU programmes are often not just responsible for writing the project proposals, designing, promoting and managing the project, and additionally coordinating the consortia, the partners and the stakeholders. They are furthermore expected to observe, evaluate, research and report on the whole project (Coleman *et al.*, 2012; Astrom *et al.*, 2011). Accordingly, participants frequently have "difficulties in distinguishing between areas of their work in which they were establishing and running eParticipation projects and aspects of their work in which they were researching such projects" (Macintosh *et al.*, 2006a, p. 10). Researchers are clearly burdened with too many and too conflicting responsibilities: they are asked, on the one hand, to manage the projects 'successfully', but on the other hand they are requested to critically report on the projects' failures and mistakes. The kind of hands-on 'activist-researcher' we previously mentioned, when confronted with some unexpected problem, is motivated to openly acknowledge the issue, as the best way to trigger a change of route, quickly adjust the system and its procedures, and thus continue advancing with no delay. "Build early and fail fast to succeed sooner" is a mantra for web 2.0 entrepreneurs (Crossroad, 2011, p. 29). But confronting failure is much more difficult for *'consultant-researchers'*, as they are committed to fulfilling the project plan and do not want to jeopardize their future funding and/or their academic publications. If the project ends up not fulfilling its objectives –as is frequently the case– they will need to recognise it; but there is always enough room in evaluations to present additional reasoning and evidence that justify a moderate satisfaction with the results obtained.

Actually, one of the most important obstacles for the development of eParticipation as a scientific domain is the virtual inexistence of sound evaluations. Although its need has been stressed for years, "evaluations are very rare and, at best, carried out in a methodologically questionable manner, so that there is neither well-founded knowledge of success factors nor any quality standards" (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008, p. 138). The first reason for this under-development derives from the intrinsic difficulty of evaluating eParticipation: all evaluation methodologies that have been proposed so far are quite complex and have not provided satisfactory results (Aichholzer *et al.*, 2009; Panopoulou *et al.*, 2010; Ricciardi *et al.*, 2010). Nevertheless, the aforementioned 'misaligned and conflicting incentives' provided by the innovation support programmes have also contributed to strongly aggravate this problem. Not just because of the practice of commissioning the project's evaluation to someone affected by conflict of interest –*the consortium responsible for implementing the project, generally*–, but also because the research programmes have frequently not demanded –nor, consequently, really desired– critical and insightful evaluations as a standard tool to measure the cost-effectiveness of the investments performed. In the same way that traditional funding mechanisms tend to favour the best-written proposals rather than the best ideas and implementation (Crossroad, 2011), they also seem to lay more importance on receiving and filing all agreed project deliverables and outputs rather than on obtaining rigorous evaluations and significant impacts.

The case of the 'VoicE' project, funded under the 'eParticipation Preparatory Action', illustrates these aspects very well. The project's quite ambitious initial goal was to "establish an internet platform with the objective to promote the dialogue between citizens from European regions and policy makers from the European parliament, the Assembly of Regions, other EU institutions as well as regional assemblies" (Schneider *et al.*, 2008). More concretely, the project aimed to "test an eParticipation model based on the regions, with a thematic focus on consumer protection legislation", planning to achieve "high acceptance and participation by both citizens and EU decision-makers"*,* by "establish effective communication channels between citizens and their representatives" (Marco, 2009). With a budget of 812000 euros, the project was implemented by a consortium of 9 partners from 3 countries, and lasted for two years. As part of its dissemination strategy, diverse aspects of the project were presented in many conferences and academic journals (e.g.: Holzner *et al.*, 2009; Marco, 2009; Scherer *et al.*, 2009; Scherer *et al.*, 2010a; Schneider *et al.*, 2008). One of the declared project's intents was to "critically evaluate the approach and compare its results with other eParticipation initiatives" (Schneider *et al.*, 2008), and indeed, for the project's iterative evaluation strategy, one of the most elaborated evaluation frameworks was used (Macintosh *et al.*, 2006b, 2008). Thus, their final evaluation report (Scherer *et al.*, 2010a) provided a great deal of information analyzing sixteen different criteria, which were grouped under three main perspectives: project, democratic and socio-technical. On a first look the report seems to provide an honest and comprehensive evaluation, in spite of being a little vague and over-ambitious in some of its claims. An attentive and critical reading, however, reveals that it fails to point out the most significant conclusion that should be derived from the data provided: that the whole platform failed to work as an eParticipation system.

The evaluation informs that neither citizens nor politicians were willing to use the communicative features provided by the system: Forums, Twitter or Social Bookmarking functionalities remained "rather unused". In fact, the only interactive feature that obtained some attention was the monthly poll, which asked questions like "Are you satisfied with the Lisbon Treaty? Yes / No / Not much", and cannot reasonably be considered as an 'eParticipation tool'. Because of the 100 daily –"mostly short"– visits that the platform received, the report judges the system as a good source of up-to-date information and news, which "enhanced the scope of expertise of informing citizens". But even this statement seems dubious: blogs and information sources that are considered useful and relevant are usually subscribed via RSS, and the report informs that this feature remained "rather unused" too. In practical terms, the behaviour and effect of the system was that of a standard 'informative blog' with not many followers or influence, which would be ran on a 'pro-bono' basis by several EU officials who would regularly update it with information about consumer protection and the EU. The main difference would be the cost: 0 to 812000 euro.

The contrast between the ambitious objectives that were set for the project and its final *'less than meagre'* results is manifestly evident, but the project evaluation managed not to pay any attention to it: by simply not acknowledging the relevance of the issue or even its very existence, there was no need to confront it. And for all the peripheral small issues that, alternatively, did receive some criticism, their responsibility can be alleged to lie out of the project's reach. For example, to explain why politicians did not use VoicE,

the report claims they "are overcharged with their usual work and a huge amount of participation possibilities that ask them to contribute".

All in all, the project's evaluation missed its stated objective of examining "to what degree the approach chosen in VoicE delivers suitable tools for establishing successful e-participation platforms on a European level", as it failed to appraise the most significant thesis, that "there were fundamental flaws in the project's proposal and assumptions that made the project fail". And indeed, it would not have been appropriate to voice that kind of concern, because a follow-up project –'VoiceS', with one million euro extra budget– was already approved, to enhance the VoicE platform by incorporating three new disparate functionalities: serious games, semantics and social networks (Holzner *et al.*, 2009). As part of VoiceS a "step-by-step guideline for management, development and deployment of e-participation endeavours" would be written, which would provide "guidance on how to successfully implement e-participation initiatives" (Scherer *et al.*, 2010b). The functionalities introduced to the VoicE system had actually no relation with the various issues that afflicted it, and thus did not really improve its performance. Nonetheless they allowed the consortia to claim that "VoiceS goes beyond web 2.0 and provides eParticipation 3.0" (Gil *et al.*, 2009)[10]. Marketing replaced science and buzzwords took the place of innovation and impact evaluation. Not having been able to make Web 1.0 eParticipation work, having failed to even conceptualise Web 2.0 properly... Web 3.0 eParticipation got advertised. And the EU bought it. Once again.

4. Treatment: The 'yellow trick' road ahead

"There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil
to one who is striking at the root" (Thoreau, 1854)

The aim of the previous section was to diagnose the most relevant weaknesses and problems of European eParticipation, and thus focused more on 'lacks' than on 'haves'. Needless to say, there were also remarkable experiences and projects that offered a significant 'value for investment' like, for example, the 'CitizenScape' project (CitizenScape, 2010a, b) or 'Pep-NET', an informal network of eParticipation practitioners and researchers swarming around a collaborative blog. But it must be acknowledged that, in general, the innovation environment promoted by the EU was not conducive to incentivize similar good results. The objective of this final 'treatment' section is to present several recommendations for improving the research and innovation policies in the field, and thus provide some guidance for the tricky and challenging road ahead of us, which –like the yellow road of Oz– will demand a big deal of courage, intelligence, good-heartedness and empathy of the EC and the whole eParticipation community.

As we have mentioned before, during recent years a lot of self-questioning has been already happening in Europe. In fact, the EC is currently appraising and reframing –as part of the overarching 'Europe 2020' strategy and its flagship initiative 'Innovation Union'– not just its eParticipation initiatives, but the whole European research and innovation programmes. Its aim is to develop a radically new approach to EU's research and innovation funding (European Commission, 2011b), "bringing together current funding instruments under a Common Strategic Framework that will offer a seamless set of financing instruments, supporting the whole chain from blue sky research to demonstration and financing of SMEs". A key element of this strategy will be a radical simplification and harmonisation of rules and procedures across the board, as well as a stronger focus on tackling societal challenges and the mobilization of public procurement as a driver of innovation (European Commission, 2011a, b). An additional declared goal is to attract the brightest researchers, social innovators and most inventive organizations –be them from industry, academia, SMEs or Civil Society–, boosting cross-border mobility and research collaboration through Europe.

And indeed, a great deal of attention and reflection has been specifically devoted to the eParticipation field. In addition to the array of proposals advanced by scholars and experts –which we have referenced through the paper– we want to stress the relevance of four far-reaching studies which aimed to inform and orient public action in the eParticipation domain. They are: (1) the "Recommendation on electronic Democracy" commissioned by the Council of Europe (CoE, 2009); (2) the study on the "Electronic Participation of Citizens and the Business Community in e-Government", conducted on behalf of the German federal government (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008); (3) the "Study and supply of services on the development of eParticipation in the EU" (European eParticipation, 2009c, d, e); and finally, (4) the "Crossroad project: a participative

---

roadmap for ICT research in electronic governance and policy modelling" (Crossroad, 2010, 2011). These studies concur in their general analysis and conclusions, like considering that e-democracy should be inclusive, deliberative and empowering; that its focus should not lie so much on technology, but on "democracy" and its many stakeholders; that it is necessary to integrate electronic and non-electronic forms of democratic engagement; etc. All studies come somehow to evidence the unsatisfactory development of the field in the last years, and together supply more than seventy wide-ranging guidelines and recommendations for policy-makers; fortunately, many of these recommendations are, again, aligned among the studies.

Their most important conclusion, for the purposes of this paper, is the corroboration that current European funding models, such as FP and CIP, are not working well for the eParticipation field. Research in such rapidly developing, complex and demand-driven applied research fields cannot be planned linearly, several years in advance (Crossroad, 2011, p. 23). But European instruments are typically characterized by tedious bureaucratic procedures, long selection processes and lengthy documents required to be submitted. They thus tend to favour bigger, established research organisations, grouped in wide international consortia –which "spend a big portion of budget for coordination and travel", and "may not necessarily have the right skills to power the participatory paradigm"–, rather than the agile and small 'pioneer organizations', which are garnered with the best ideas and are capable to plough and harvest the serendipitous innovation that characterises the domain (Crossroad, 2011, p. 31; European eParticipation, 2009c, p. 64). European programs have also favoured a top-down vision of eParticipation, much centred in one-shot government-oriented initiatives, which rarely generate ground-breaking advancements, because of their lack of technical competence and because of the strong level of administrative and political coordination required, that hinders innovation (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008, p. 162). In such a context, existing mechanisms must be reformed and complemented with more flexible and open funding models, applied both to basic and applied research (Crossroad, 2011).

Thus, the policy recommendations demand the creation of "specific funding programmes that tap the innovative energy of NGOs", ensuring that at least low-level financial support is available to innovators on the periphery and funds are not monopolised by the major research centres (European eParticipation, 2009b, p. 31, 2009c, p. 64). Many of these initiatives typically suffer from limited visibility and face funding problems to ensure sustainable operations (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008, p. 162; European eParticipation, 2009e, p. 27). The EU should devise mechanisms for identifying and supporting such exceptional initiatives and help to subsidise the creation and experimentation with new system and tools which could then be replicated within Europe (European eParticipation, 2009e, p. 55). Governments should consequently be proactive in order to integrate, and eventually support, bottom-up social innovation initiated by new emerging actors, like individuals, formal and informal civil society organisations, start-ups, and civil servants (Punie *et al.*, 2009).

Since web-based innovation does not require extensive investment, it is now possible to start up projects with small development teams and tiny budgets –even in the case where no public funding is available– that can be presented to financiers as a 'proof of concept'. Through competition-based funding, the innovators and researchers can be incentivised to achieve stretching targets through the prospect of securing a financial award (European Commission, 2011a), a follow-up grant, a temporary fellowship or some kind of institutional support for the project. Public funding should thus be used to encourage the creation of basic prototypes, and subsequently to integrate the best ones in a multi-staged process of improvement, deployment, replication and sustainability, conditioned to the achievement of progressively more demanding outcomes. In this way, small grants could be given to a large number of applicants to enable them to develop advanced prototypes of the proposed applications, and following waves of funding would only be available for the most promising applications. This kind of 'create-then-fund' mechanism makes money follow results, not the opposite, crowding away the 'experts in proposal−writing' and attracting the innovative 'doers' (Crossroad, 2011, pp. 30-31; Osimo, 2009, p. 101). These instruments allow much open-ended innovation, as they do not normally demand any specific solution but simply define the problem to be solved. With no money provided upfront they reward the best actual result and not the best-written proposal, and thus "open up the often self-referential circles of government-funded projects" (Crossroad, 2011).

Governments are finally encouraged to help establish and/or support independent and trusted third party services for eParticipation, better than attempting to run them on their own (Albrecht *et al.*, 2008; Coleman

et al., 2009a; Millard *et al.*, 2010; Smith *et al.*, 2009). This way, the credibility and neutrality of the participatory processes are increased, encouraging public acceptance and wider participation, which are both necessary to get valuable outcomes. Governments should therefore provide and support frameworks for building citizen participation from the bottom, and maintain a strong commitment to participate in the citizen engagement process and to seriously consider its outcomes as potential policy initiatives, but avoid any attempt to directly control the eParticipation avenues (Bruns *et al.*, 2011).

Most of the recommendations provided by the studies are thus, overall, consistent with the analysis we have performed in previous sections. We would like, nevertheless, to supplement them with several succinct suggestions, which stem directly from the issues we highlighted in our diagnosis section.

Our first recommendation is quite obvious: in order to promote the development of the (e)Participation field, the European Commission should stop considering Participation and eParticipation as different things. They are not just the two sides of the same coin; in the 21st century they are simply one and the same thing. If the European (e)Participation dwarves hope to see farther than ever before, they must be willing to stand on the shoulders of the Participation giants. Existing research and project funding silos need to be mixed together: EU programmes should encourage sociologists and political scientists to devote a significant part of their energies to integrate ICT at the core of the citizen engagement initiatives they devise; correspondingly, technical and socio-technical researchers should not be allowed to impersonate participation practitioners, but forced to dialogue and partner with them. Experimentation needs to be linked to theoretical reflection and research: the strategy of 'short pilots' that the EU intensively promoted has proved unable to advance the field. At the same time, cross-disciplinarity must become real and kaleidoscopic, and scholars need to recognize that academia cannot be the source of agile innovation in this field. Yet researchers, once released from the burden of having to design, manage and report on whole projects, can nevertheless play an essential role for maturing the eParticipation field, by acting as advisers, theorists, inquirers and evaluators of real world eParticipation systems and experiences. The best way to make eParticipation research effective is to open it up to social innovators, giving them the lead and putting research and projects to the service of Civil Society needs (Prieto-Martín, 2006a). By nurturing and supporting this kind of experiences, the EU could influence them to better accommodate the kind of empirical, longitudinal and comparative experimentation that is required to scientifically advance the domain (European eParticipation, 2009b, e).

Accordingly, the EU would need to abandon its previous 'push' approach, in which it acted as the field's biggest contractor and main driving force. It now needs to favour a 'pull' scheme in which the EU plays a supporting –but still essential– role. Instead of directly leading –by 'sub-contracting innovation' to multi-country consortiums, which implement ultra-expensive projects that, in many cases, do not make any sense– the EU should become the 'catalyst' of the dialectical and endogenous change processes happening within the eParticipation domain. EU's aim should paradoxically be 'to achieve much more, by spending much less'. In order to achieve it, it should cultivate a profound understanding of the field –of the stakeholders involved, the capacities and expertise of each of them, their motivations and potential conflicts of interest, etc.– and devise an innovation support framework that effectively articulates the various actors and aligns their incentives, with the explicit intention of shaping their behaviour toward an effective cooperation that truly advances the field. Each actor should concentrate their work in the areas where they have real value to add –e.g.: the Innovator should create, the Scholar design experiments and evaluate them, the Consultant manage projects, Civil Society Organizations and Governments should disseminate and use the tools, etc.–. Ideally, each actor should work in the topics that intrinsically motivate them, i.e., those tasks that they would be willing to do even if they were not paid for them. Each stakeholder would mind its part of the business, but all of them would need to share a common vision and thus, for once, "sing from the same hymn-book" (Kolsaker et al., 2009).

A focus on impact evaluation is also required: the contributions of each actor need to be regularly assessed by independent evaluators with metrics that adequately measure their performance and impact (eGovMoNet, 2010). Evaluations cannot just be a collection of hardly comparable measurements, that supposedly "identify strengths, weaknesses and improvement opportunities", but finally fail to provide enough insight as to detect the projects' core problems (Loukis *et al.*, 2010a; Loukis *et al.*, 2010b). Impact evaluations should, actually, be the foundation for decision-making; most particularly, the decision to continue –or discontinue– the funding of a project or an action within a project, would be derived from the evi-

dence concerning its impact. New data-driven evaluation models need to be devised, that go beyond the benchmarking strategies used to date in the e-Government domain (eGovMoNet, 2010; Verdegem *et al.*, 2010), and are able to better capture and judge the goals and achievements obtained. For the area of social web applications, for example, evaluation models could be borrowed from the epidemiologic field, to assess the 'viral growth' and 'infectious quality' of the system's user base, and verify whether the desired diffusion rates were met or not.

To establish this incentivizing 'innovation environment', the EU should remain open-minded, act agilely and be willing to partner with any institution that can provide relevant expertise and capacities. For example, the kind of innovative mechanisms mentioned above, like fellowships for social innovators, competition-based funding, code-camps or conditional support for projects, could possibly be more efficiently developed by institutions like the *Ashoka* foundation, which already possess the infrastructure, processes and experience required to carry them out. Another promising tool that the EU should be willing to experiment with, are the 'crowd-funding' platforms like 'Kickstarter' or 'Flattr', as a way to support the engagement of end-users and promote more demand-driven innovation (Crossroad, 2011).

4.1. Concluding remarks

All in all, what we have been describing so far corresponds, to some extent, with an attempt to apply the notions of 'positive deviance amplification' (Pascale *et al.*, 2010; Waugh *et al.*, 2001) to the research and innovation support landscape. This approach, which has been successfully developed in the international cooperation and health-policy fields, requires that the 'positive deviants' operating within a system are firstly identified. In our case, positive deviants are those institutions and individuals that are already embodying the kind of innovation and/or research excellence that the EU desires, and that have results and working prototypes to show. The quality, depth and the potential –especially in terms of scalability, sustainability and replicability– of these projects and achievements would need to be assessed to determine whether or not they deserve support. Then, the focus would be placed on increasing the visibility and impact of positive deviants, by helping them to make their projects successful and facilitating the establishment of empowering partnerships for them.

In summary: what the EU somehow needs to do is 'to commit itself, assume its responsibility for *'putting the horse before the cart, hanging the carrot in the right direction and holding the stick close to the rump'*, and thus start acting as a catalytic force that stimulates eParticipation change-makers, links them together and empowers them to boost their most relevant scientific and creative endeavors, both theoretical and applied. Only in this way the EU will be able to influence, for the better, the holistic development of this crucial research domain.

5. Back to the 'wider context': Waiting for the barbarians

"Our lies reveal as much about us as our truths"
(J.M.Coetzee, "The slow man", 2004)

Meanwhile, in Guatemala, *Sotz'il Jay* has presented its new staging, which not only dances the myths of the *'Book of the People'* –the sacred Mayan *'Popol Wu'uj'*– but also conveys a "vivid evocation of hope", by showing how "the [forthcoming] inauguration of a new cycle of the Mayan calendar offers a chance for humanity to seek balance and equality in the spiritual, social, cultural, political, and economic realms" (Neff, 2011). Through their artistic and cultural work, through their courageous fight on the stages, the *Sotz'ils* encourage their fellow citizens to believe in their own capacity to progress and to materialise that ideal of a multi-cultural and democratic nation, which so many Guatemalans dream of (Zardetto, 2011).

Europe is currently, on its part, facing its own democratic challenges. The traditional political class is losing the respect of the citizens and, with it, the democratic legitimacy of their mandates is vanishing too. Despite all official declarations of concern about the growing political apathy of European citizens, no significant changes have been introduced in the European or national levels, and the abstention rates continue to grow. In 1994 participation still defeated abstention by 56,7% to 43,3% in the European Parliament elections. 15 years later the situation has reversed: in the last elections it was 57% of voters who chose not to participate. And although voting is legally compulsory in Greece, 57% was also the percentage of citizens that refused to vote in the mayoral elections of the city which is considered as *"the birthplace of democracy and western civilization"*; thus, fewer than 4 in 10 Athenians voted for any of the contenders. The

new mayor was finally elected, in the second round, with the votes of 15,81% of citizens; a quite meagre share, when compared to 69,57% not voting for him nor his opponent. In this troubled times of financial calamity, growing inequality and euro-scepticism, nationalist and far-right parties have also been gaining ground in several European countries: the recent cases of the Netherlands, Hungary, Sweden, Denmark, France and Finland are all examples of this tendency. If these dissenting parties achieve a sizeable influence in their national governments, EU's governance arrangements –much based on consensus– could soon become ineffectual. The whole European integration project is, as never before, deemed to be "cracking" (Torreblanca, 2011).

There has been talk about reducing the 'democratic deficit' of European institutions always since the term was coined 34 years ago (JEF, 1977). But even the reforms introduced with the 'Lisbon Treaty' did not mean a significant change in the eyes of citizens. On the contrary, the process of enacting the Treaty has damaged the democratic credentials of the EU, as it implied a factual disdain for the referenda from the Netherlands, France and Ireland that rejected the European Constitution and the Treaty. To make things worse, the first hundreds of US diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks already sufficed to "reveal comprehensively [...] to what extent the political classes in advanced Western democracies have been deceiving its citizens" (Moreno, 2010). They have exposed, as never before, the 'theatrical' nature of our representative democracies: politicians that say one thing publicly but do the opposite behind the scenes; governments that claim to adhere to high spirited principles, but are willing to contempt democratic and international laws whenever it suits their interest, if they have the power to do it; double-standards on human-rights, and thus the encouragement in 'friendly' countries of the same acts that are harshly criticized in others; etc.

Democracy was the product of an age where effective representation was constrained by disconnections of time and distance. As these barriers are transcended by communication technologies, democratic institutions can only flourish if they become more porous, accessible, accountable and rooted in public space (Coleman, 2003). It is understandable that, in the 18th century, remote political representatives were considered by the Founding Fathers of the United States as "the only defence against the inconveniences of democracy consistent with the democratic form of government" (Farrand, 1911). But a lot has changed since then, and those representative arrangements are becoming more and more ineffective and illegitimate. Nowadays, a much better informed, educated, active and connected citizenry is becoming tired of interpreting the figurant role in a "democratic play" where their interests are not properly protected nor taken into account. Will this dramatic farce continue if the choir refuses to perform?

Existing political power balances are already shifting due to the empowerment of groups of citizens using social computing applications (Huijboom *et al.*, 2009; Punie *et al.*, 2009). Eight years ago neither *Twitter*, nor *Facebook* nor even the *Web 2.0* existed. The 'Cablegate' leaks –of which 95,5% are still pending to be released by Wikileaks– are considered as instrumental in triggering the Tunisian revolution, the first of many uprisings that are currently convulsing the political landscape in the Middle East. One week before the last regional and municipal elections, the Spanish youth took also the streets, after organizing themselves via social networks, to demand –as was previously done in Tunisia and Egypt– a "Real Democracy NOW".

'Avaaz', an organization that aims "to close the gap between the world we have and the world most people everywhere want" by means of citizen mobilization actions worldwide, was born in 2007. It has now 9,3 million members and is getting twelve thousand new each day. Its extraordinary advocacy capacity has been recognized by media as The Economist, Süddeutsche Zeitung or The Times (Bentley, 2011). In Europe Avaaz was able, for example, to present to the EU Commissioner for Health the first 'one million signatures petition', more than a year before the legislation on the European Citizens' Initiative enters into force. And they claim to have obtained several significant victories in the last four years, "from establishing the world's largest ocean preserve and protecting the bans on whale hunting and ivory trading, to passing strong forestry and anti-corruption laws in Brazil, to shifting Japanese, German and Canadian policies on climate change".

Like it or not, the 'Facebook of civic engagement' is about to be created somewhere, probably at a negligible cost and with less official support. For the first time in history, public participation will become a reasonably useful occupation. Or even worse: by means of these platforms, civic engagement could turn into an amusing activity, or even an addictive and fashionable endeavour. The usage of these systems will spread, virally, and its accumulated effect will grow exponentially (Reed, 2000). Taking roots in local poli-

tics, it will empower citizens everywhere to increasingly cooperate one with another, and to collaborate with those politicians sensible enough as to care and listen. Insensitive politicians and parties, on their part, will be hold to account for their deeds much more easily, and in many cases they could be curtly 'replaced'. Internet will thus finally impact political structures, and representative institutions will –after centuries of relative stagnation– evolve.

To "sustain its legitimacy, democracy as we know it will have to change, and to change significantly" (Schmitter *et al.*, 2004). The time has come for European institutions to decide if they want to be architects of the future or defenders of decline; to resolve whether they are willing to play a leading role in the political and democratic developments that our representative institutions demand, or rather prefer to wait until social unrest, once more, makes the transformations towards balance, equality and efficacy unavoidable.

But the democratic e-[(R)]evolution won't be EU-funded, will it?

Acknowledgement

References

Acemoglu, D. & Robinson, J.A. (2006). *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aichholzer, G. & Westholm, H. (2009). Evaluating eParticipation Projects: Practical Examples and Outline of an Evaluation Framework. *European Journal of ePractice, 7*, 1-18.

Albrecht, S., Kohlrausch, N.*, et al.* (2008). eParticipation - Electronic Participation of Citizens and the Business Community in eGovernment. Bremen.

Astrom, J., & Grönlund, Å. (2011). Online consultations in local government: What works, when and how. In S. Coleman & P.M. Shane (Eds.), *Connecting democracy: Online consultation and the flow of political communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bannister, F. (2009). ICT Hyperbole and the Red Queen Syndrome: e-Participation Policy and the Challenge of Technology Change. In R. Lucariniet al (Eds.), *E-Gov. 2.0: pave the way for e-Participation* (pp. 115-125). Roma: EuroSpace.

Barber, B.R. (1984). *Strong democracy: Participatory politics for a new age*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bentley, S. (2011). *Can Avaaz change the world in a click?* London: The Times, 2011.02.09.

Bicking, M., & Wimmer, M. (2010). Tools and Technologies in eParticipation: Insights from Project Evaluation. *Fourth International Conference on Online Deliberation*, Leeds.

Brodie, E., Cowling, E.*, et al.* (2009). Understanding participation: a literature review. Pathways through participation.

Bruns, A. & Swift, A. (2011). g4c2c: Enabling citizen engagement at arms' length from government. *EDem 2010, 3(1)*, 57-69.

Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. (Eds) (2009). The Sage handbook of grounded theory. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Chadwick, A. (2009). Web 2.0: New challenges for the study of e-Democracy in an era of informational exuberance. *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society, 5(1)*, 9-41.

Charalabidis, Y., Gionis, G.*, et al.* (2010). Towards a Systematic Exploitation of Web 2.0 and Simulation Modeling Tools in Public Policy Process, in *LNCS 6229, Proceedings of ePart 2010*, Lausanne.

Chrissafis, T. & Rohen, M. (2010). European eParticipation Developments: From ad hoc Experiences towards Mass Engagement. *Journal of eDemocracy, 2(2)*, 89-98.

CitizenScape (2010a). D2.1.2: CitizenScape Monitoring & Evaluation Report: CitizenScape Consortium.

CitizenScape (2010b). D3.4: Final Report: CitizenScape Consortium.

CitizenScape (2010c). Lessons learnt from CitizenScape Pilot trials: CitizenScape Consortium.

CoE (2009). *Electronic democracy (e-democracy). Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 18 February 2009*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Coleman, S. (2003). The future of the Internet and Democracy. Beyond metaphors towards policy, *Promise and problems of e-Democracy: challenges of Online Citizen Engagement*. Paris: OECD.

Coleman, S. (2006). Democracy in the Internet Age (speech). Tallinn (Estonia): e-Governance Academy.

Coleman, S. & Blumler, J.G. (2009a). *The Internet and Democratic Citizenship: Theory, Practice and Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coleman, S. & Kaposi, I. (2009b). A study of e-participation projects in third-wave democracies. *International Journal of Electronic Governance, 2(4)*, 302-327.

Coleman, S., & Moss, G. (2012). Under Construction: The Field of Online Deliberation Research. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 9(1)*, 1–15.

Corcuera, L. (2010). *Cuando el arte cuesta la vida*. Madrid: Diagonal, 2010.09.24.

Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking 'Participation': models, meanings and practices. *Community Development Journal, 43(3)*, 269–283.

Cornwall, A., Romano, J*., et al.* (2008). Brazilian Experiences of Participation and Citizenship: A Critical Look, Discussion Paper. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Cornwall, A. & Schattan Coelho, V., Eds. (2006). Spaces For Change? The Politics of Citizen Participation in New Democratic Arenas. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Crossroad (2010). Final Roadmap on ICT for Governance and Policy Modelling. Leicester: Crossroad Project.

Crossroad (2011). Final Policy Recommendations on ICT for Governance and Policy Modelling. Leicester: Crossroad Project.

De Cindio, F. & Peraboni, C. (2009). Fostering e-Participation at the Urban Level: Outcomes from a Large Field Experiment in *LNCS 5694. Proceedings of ePart 2009*, Linz.

DEMO-net (2006a). DEMO-net: Overall Project Presentation: DEMO-net.

DEMO-net (2006b). DEMO-net: The eParticipation Network (Presentation Brochure). Thessaloniki: University of Macedonia.

Easterly, W. (2007). *The white man's burden: why the West's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good*. New York: Penguin Press.

eGovMoNet (2010). D 3.3: eGovernment Monitor Network, Impact Measurement Methodology: eGovMoNet Consortium.

European Commission (2009). *Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment*. Malmö.

European Commission (2010a). Interim Evaluation of the Seventh Framework Programme. Report of the Expert Group. Brusels: European Commission.

European Commission (2010b). The European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015: Harnessing ICT to promote smart, sustainable & innovative Government. Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission (2011a). Green Paper. From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding. Brussels: European Commission.

European Commission (2011b). Innovation – key issues for the European Council. Brussels: European Commission.

European eParticipation (2009a). D1.1: Major factors shaping the development of eParticipation: European eParticipation Study.

European eParticipation (2009b). D1.3: Main benefits of eParticipation developments in the EU - a contextualisation with reference to the EU governance regime and the European public sphere: European eParticipation Study.

European eParticipation (2009c). D5.1: eParticipation recommendations - focusing on the European level: European eParticipation Study.

European eParticipation (2009d). D7.5: Final Report: European eParticipation Study.

European eParticipation (2009e). Summary Report, Study and supply of services on the development of eParticipation in the EU. Brussels: European Commission.

European Union (2011). Online database of EU research projects, CORDIS. Retrieved May 01, 2011, from http://cordis.europa.eu

Farrand, M. (1911). *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

FEED (2009). D1.1: End-User Characteristics and System Actors: FEED Consortium.

Ferguson, T. (1987). *Golden Rule: The Investment Theory of Party Competition and the Logic of Money-Driven Politics*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

Ferro, E. & Molinari, F. (2010). Framing Web 2.0 in the Process of Public Sector Innovation: Going Down the Participation Ladder. *European Journal of ePractice, 9*, 20-34.

Fisher, J. (1998). *Non-Governments. NGOs and the Political Development of the Third World*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press.

Fraser, C. (2006). Towards eParticipation in Democratic Decision Making. Workshop on Electronic Voting and e-Government in the UK, Edinburgh.

Freschi, A.C., Medaglia, R*., et al.* (2009). eParticipation in the institutional domain: a review of research. Bergamo: DEMO-Net.

Galeano, E. (1992). *The book of embraces*. New York: Norton & Company.

Gaventa, J. & Barret, G. (2010). So What Difference Does it Make? Mapping the Outcomes of Citizen Engagement, Citizenship, Participation and Accountability. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Gil, S., Scherer, S*., et al.* (2009). Giving citizens from the regions their voiceS in EU legislation with WEB 3.0 tools. In R. Lucariniet al (Eds.), *E-Gov. 2.0: pave the way for e-Participation* (pp. 134-140). Roma: EuroSpace.

Handler, J., Shadbolt, N*., et al.* (2008). Web Science: An interdisciplinary approach to understanding the web. *Communications of the ACM, 51(7)*, 60-69.

Hermida, A. (2010). E-democracy remixed. Learning from the BBC's Action Network and the shift from a static commons to a participatory multiplex. *Journal of eDemocracy, 2(2)*, 119-130.

Holzner, M., Schepers, J*., et al.* (2009). Beyond Web 2.0 - What Serious Games, Semantics and Social Networks can Contribute to eParticipation, in *Proceedings of the eChallenges e2009 Conference*, Istanbul.

Howe, C. (2009). Building the Virtual Town Hall: Civic Architecture for Cyberspace. Hove: Public-i.

Huijboom, N., van den Broek, T*., et al.* (2009). Public Services 2.0: The Impact of Social Computing on Public Services: ipts - institute for prospective technological studies.

Ideal-EU (2009). D6.9: Final Dissemination Report: Ideal-EU Consortium.

JEF (1977). JEF Manifesto. Berlin: Congress of Young European Federalists.

Johnston, P. (2010). Transforming Government's Policy-Making Processes. Why encouraging more and easier citizen input into policy-making is not enough. *JeDEM, 2(2)*, 162-169.

Kadlec, A. & Friedman, W. (2007). Deliberative Democracy and the Problem of Power. *Journal of Public Deliberation, 3(1)*.

Kolsaker, A. & Lee-Kelley, L. (2009). Singing from the Same Hymnsheet? The Impact of Internal Stakeholders on the Development of e-Democracy. *Electronic Journal of e-Government, 7(2)*, 155-162.

Kubicek, H. (2007). Electronic Democracy and Deliberative Consultation on Urban Projects. Report for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. Bremen: University of Bremen.

Kubicek, H., Lippa, B*., et al.* (2007). Report on state of the art approaches, relevant disciplines, key researchers, and socio-technical research issues. Bremen: DEMO-Net.

Kubicek, H. (2010). The Potential of E-Participation in Urban Planning: A European Perspective. In C. N. Silva (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on E-Planning*. IGI Global, 168-194.

Linhart, J. & Papp, L. (2010). Bridging the gap between bottom-up and top-down e-Participation approaches. e-Participation as active citizenship. EDem 2010, Krems.

Lippa, B. (2008). eParticipation Evaluation and Impact. Bremen/Leeds: DEMO-Net.

Loukis, E., Xenakis, A*., et al.* (2010a). An evaluation framework for e-participation in parliaments. *International Journal of Electronic Governance, 3(1)*, 25-47.

Loukis, E., Xenakis, A*., et al.* (2010b). Using Gis Tools to Support e-Participation – A Systematic Evaluation, in *LNCS 6229, Proceedings of ePart 2010*, Lausanne.

Macintosh, A. & Coleman, S. (2006a). Multidisciplinary roadmap and report on eParticipation research: DEMO-Net.

Macintosh, A., Coleman, S*., et al.* (2009). eParticipation: The Research Gaps, in *LNCS 5694. Proceedings of ePart 2009*, Linz.

Macintosh, A. & Whyte, A. (2006b). Evaluating how eParticipation changes local democracy, in *eGovernment Workshop '06 (eGOV06)*, London.

Macintosh, A. & Whyte, A. (2008). Towards an evaluation framework for eParticipation. *Transforming Government: People, Process & Policy, 2(1)*, 16-30.

Mahrer, H. & Krimmer, R. (2005). Towards the enhancement of e-democracy: identifying the notion of the 'middleman paradox'. *Information Systems Journal, 15(1)*, 27-42.

Maier, E. & Reimer, U. (2010). Process Support for Increasing Participation in eParticipation. *Journal of eDemocracy, 2(1)*, 46-55.

Marco, C. (2009). VoicE - Giving European people a voice in EU-legislation, in *Proceedings of 7th International Eastern European e|Gov Days*, Prague.

Maslow, A.H. (1966). *The Psychology of Science: A Reconnaissance*. New York: Harper & Row.

Medaglia, R. (2007). The challenged identity of a field: The state of the art of eParticipation research. *Information Polity, 12*, 169-181.

Millard, J. & Meyerhoff Nielsen, M. (2010). European Status of E-Participation and what is needed to optimise future Benefits? EDem 2010, Krems.

Molinari, F. (2010). On sustainable participation, in *LNCS 6229, Proceedings of ePart 2010*, Lausanne.

Momentum (2010). D2.7: eParticipation Projects Consolidated Results: Momentum Consortium.

Moreno, J. (2010). *Lo que de verdad ocultan los Gobiernos*. Madrid: El País, 2010.12.19.

Muller, J. M. & Kogan, S. (2010). Grounded Theory Method in HCI and CSCW. Cambridge: IBM Center for Social Software.

NCDD (2009). Core principles for public engagement. Boiling Springs: National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation.

Neff, P. (2011). Oxlaju B'aktun: Grupo Sotz'il dances the Maya calendar. Ciudad de Guatemala: Cascadia Solidaria.

OECD (2007). Evaluating Public Participation in Policy Making. Paris: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Osborne, R. (2006). *Civilization: a new history of the Western world*. New York: Pegasus Books.

Osimo, D. (2009). A Short History of Government 2.0: From Cool Projects to Policy Impact. In J. Gøtze & C. B. Pedersen (Eds.), *State of the eUnion. Government 2.0 and Onwards* (pp. 97-107). Copenhagen: 21gov.net.

Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E*., et al.* (2009). eParticipation initiatives: How is Europe progressing? *European Journal of ePractice, 7*.

Panopoulou, E., Tambouris, E*., et al.* (2010). eParticipation Initiatives in Europe: Learning from Practitioners, in *LNCS 6229, Proceedings of ePart 2010*, Lausanne.

Parés, M., Pomeroy, M*., et al.* (2007a). Observing the local participatory democracies. Barcelona: IOPD.

Parés, M., Pomeroy, M*., et al.* (2007b). Practical Guide for Evaluating Participatory Processes. Barcelona: IOPD.

Pascale, R., Sternin, J*., et al.* (2010). *The Power of Positive Deviance.* Boston: Harvard Business Press.

Peart, M.N. & Ramos Díaz, J. (2007). Comparative Project on Local e-Democracy Initiatives in Europe and North America. Zürich: e-Democracy Centre.

Pierson, P. (2000). Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics. *The American Political Science Review, 94(2)*, 251-267.

Pratchett, L. (2006). Understanding e-Democracy in Europe. Strasbourg: Ad-hoc committee on e-democracy (CAHDE), Council of Europe.

Prieto-Martín, P. (2006a). Putting e-Participation research on the service of Civil Society, in *European Research Workshop: Mapping eParticipation, MCIS 2006*, Venice (Italy).

Prieto-Martín, P. (2006b). Virtual Environments for Citizen Participation: Principal Bases for Design, in *ECEG 2006: 6th European Conference on e-Government*, Marburg (Germany).

Prieto-Martín, P. (2010). *Las alas de Leo. La participación ciudadana del siglo XX*. Panajachel: Asociación Ciudades Kyosei.

Pruitt, B. & Thomas, P. (2007). Democratic Dialogue - A Handbook for Practitioners. Stockholm: IDEA, OAS & UNDP.

Punie, Y., Lusoli, W*., et al.*, Eds. (2009). The Impact of Social Computing on the EU Information Society and Economy. Sevile: ipts - institute for prospective technological studies.

Rambøll Management (2008). Evaluation of the e-Participation preparatory action: European Commission.

Reed, D. (2000). That Sneaky Exponential: Beyond Metcalfe's Law to the Power of Community Building.

Ricciardi, F. & Lombardi, P. (2010). Widening the Disciplinary Scope of eParticipation. Reflections after a Research on Tourism and Cultural Heritage, in *LNCS 6229, Proceedings of ePart 2010*, Lausanne.

Rowe, G. & Frewer, L.J. (2005). A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms. *Science, Technology, & Human Values, 30(2)*, 251-290.

Sæbø, Ø., Rose, J*., et al.* (2008). The shape of eParticipation: Characterizing an emerging research area. *Government Information Quarterly, 25*, 400-428.

Sanford, C. & Rose, J. (2007). Characterizing eParticipation. *International Journal of Information Management, 27(6)*, 406-421.

Sasaki, D., Ed. (2010). Technology for Transparency: The role of technology and citizen media in promoting transparency, accountability and civic participation. Amsterdam: Global Voices.

Scherer, S., Karamagioli, E*., et al.* (2009). Usability Engineering in eParticipation. *European Journal of ePractice, 7*, 79-91.

Scherer, S., Schneider, C*., et al.* (2008). Studying eParticipation in Government Innovation Programmes: Lessons from a Survey, in *21th Bled eConference - eCollaboration: Overcoming Boundaries through Multi-Channel Interaction*, Bled.

Scherer, S. & Wimmer, M. (2010a). A Regional Model for E-Participation in the EU: Evaluation and Lessons Learned from VoicE, in *LNCS 6229, Proceedings of ePart 2010*, Lausanne.

Scherer, S., Wimmer, M*., et al.* (2010b). Hands-on guideline for e-participation initiatives, in *E-Government, E-Services and Global Processes: Joint IFIP TC8 and TC6 International Conferences, EGES 2010 and GISP 2010*, Brisbane.

Schmitter, P.C. & Trechsel, A.H. (2004). The Future of Democracy in Europe. Trends, Analyses and Reforms. A Green Paper for the Council of Europe. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Schneider, C., Holzner, M*., et al.* (2008). Giving European People a VoicE in EU-Legislation: Methodology and strategy of the VoicE project, in *LNCS 5184. Proceedings of EGOV 08*, Turin.

Smith, S. & Dalakiouridou, E. (2009). Contextualising Public (e)Participation in the Governance of the European Union. *European Journal of ePractice, 7*, 1-11.

Sotz'il Jay (2009). Maya' Xajoj Kojom Richin Jaloj - Mayan music and dance for change: Mayan youth recovers the wisdom of our ancestors. Sololá: Lagun Artean-DED.

Sydow, J., Schreyögg, G*., et al.* (2009). Organizational path dependence: opening the black box. *Academy of Management Review, 34(4)*, 689-709.

Tambouris, E., Liotas, N*., et al.* (2007). A Framework for Assessing eParticipation Projects and Tools, in *Proceedings of the 40th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, Hawaii.

Thelen, C.A. (2008). Our ancestors danced like this: Maya youth respond to genocide through the ancestral arts. In R. Solingeret al (Eds.), *Telling stories to change the World: Global voices on the power of narrative to build community and make social justice claims*. New York: Routledge.

Thelen, C.A. (2010). The significance and brilliance of Sotz'il: Embodying Maya Liberation. Oakland: Nisgua.

Thoreau, H.D. (1854). *Walden; or, Life in the Maine Woods*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields.

Torreblanca, J.I. (2011). *Five reasons why Europe is cracking*. Madrid: El País, 2011.05.15.

United Nations (2007). e-Participation and e-Government: Understanding the Present and Creating the Future. New York: UN.

United Nations (2008). UN E-Government Survey 2008: From E-Government to Connected Governance. New York: United Nations, Division for Public Administration and Development Management.

United Nations (2010). E-Government Survey 2010: Leveraging e-government at a time of financial and economic crisis. New York: United Nations, Division for Public Administration and Development Management.

van den Broek, T., Frissen, V*., et al.* (2010). The impact of Social Computing on Public Services: a rationale for Government 2.0. *European Journal of ePractice, 9*.

Verdegem, P., Stragier, J*., et al.* (2010). Measuring for Knowledge: A Data-Driven Research Approach for eGovernment. *Electronic Journal of e-Government, 8(2)*, 227-236.

Verlet, D., Steyvers, K*., et al.* (2007). Attitudes towards Citizen Involvement. Looking from Both Sides of the 'Gap'. Citizen Participation In Policy Making, Bristol.

Wampler, B. (2008). When Does Participatory Democracy Deepen the Quality of Democracy? Lessons from Brazil. *Comparative Politics, 41(1)*.

Waugh, B. & Silk Forrest, M. (2001). *The Soul in the Computer*. Makawao: Inner Ocean Publishing.

Westholm, H. & Wimmer, M. (2007). Interdisciplinary framework to address the socio-technical and political challenges of eParticipation. Bremen: DEMO-Net.

Zardetto, C. (2011). *El grupo Sotz'il en escena*. Ciudad de Guatemala: El Periódico, 2011.03.18.

Zouridis, S. & Thaens, M. (2003). E-Government: Towards a Public Administration Approach. *Asian Journal of Public Administration, 25(2)*, 159-183.