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Connecting institutions and citizens in the digital age

Final report

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“Where knowledge is open there are systemic changes. All we need is willingness to innovate and allocating the time and staff to adoption”

Dr. Vanessa Liston, Co-founder of CiviQ

“Democracy of the future is not a question of majority”

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Member of Parliament, Austria, Member of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

“Information is the currency of democracy”

(participant from the audience)

“The internet is not a silver bullet, it is a hornet sting which is supposed to nail any dictatorship in the world”

Mr Mikhail FEDOTOV, Advisor to the President of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the Council of the President of the Russian Federation on Development of Civil Society and Human Rights

“We live under a constitution from the Guttenberg age, but it is actually the Zuckerberg age out there”

Mr Mikhail FEDOTOV, Advisor to the President of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the Council of the President of the Russian Federation on Development of Civil Society and Human Rights

“Education is the key to democracy”

Ms Irina YASINA, Journalist and Civil Society Activist

“Access to the internet should become a human right”

Mr Adam NYMAN, Director of Debating Europe

“On Facebook, civic space taking place in private gardens”

Ms Lois Beckett, Reporter ProPublica.

Formal democracy does not always correlate with substantive democracy. Decisions that affect citizens are not taken at the national level anymore, and governments are not able to correspond to popular demand. There is a need to establish a link between global institutions and citizens.”

Ms Mary KALDOR, Professor of Global Governance at the London School of Economics

“Citizens communicate with elected officials with 21st century means. However, the governments use 20th century tools to listen to the citizens and only 19th century methods for governing.”

Ms Lois Beckett, Reporter ProPublica.

Globalisation and the impact of corporations give politicians less influence. Therefore, there is the need for a global democracy which goes hand in hand with globalisation.

Mr Robert Bjaransson, Co-founder of Citizen Foundation Iceland.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global trends point to a worldwide decline in the level of trust in democratic systems. Voter turnout rates and party membership are falling across the world. What we are witnessing is not only political apathy but a sense of betrayal felt by ordinary citizens towards their leaders.

The World Forum for Democracy reviewed the potential of Internet-based democracy applications to restore citizens' trust by making government more open and transparent and to increase motivation for political participation by shifting power from structures and organisations (parties, NGOs, trade unions, traditional media) to individuals and ad-hoc groups.

The e-democracy applications and initiatives discussed at the Forum are in an early, experimental stage of development but seem able to revitalise democracy on certain conditions. These include the emergence of a new generation of political parties whose leaders and representatives are accountable to members on an ongoing basis, and the widespread use by parties of online tools to bring elected representatives in an on-going and direct contact with citizens.

Other promising developments are collaborative platforms involving citizens in law- and policy-making to enhance problem-solving and pooling of expertise and crowdsourcing applications which increase the transparency of political processes and decisions (election violation alert systems, whistleblowing, big data applications).

The Internet makes it possible for ordinary citizens, especially the young, to voice their concerns and express their vision for society through videos and other content sharing on social media. It also enables individuals and small organisations to mobilise support and resources for various causes (e-petitions, crowd-funding) and makes activism safer in authoritarian regimes (safety of activists enhanced by digital alert applications).

The interactive nature of the Internet stimulates citizen-driven solution journalism to promote and harness new ideas and solutions emerging outside institutional channels and enables deliberation on a large scale and the emergence of shared positions on complex issues through the use of algorithms.

While the balance of power still remains within elected institutions, their functioning is to an ever greater extent subject to scrutiny, influence and input from citizens empowered through e-participation tools.

However, technological developments in the field of democracy raise a number of concerns: Liquid democracy needs to be framed by a common understanding of democracy in general, for example about which subjects should be decided by public referendums and which areas should be reserved to representative institutions and processes.

While e-petition platforms have enabled citizens to influence government or local decision-making, the movement has also given rise to charges of slacktivism, an easy, feel-good civic engagement without real commitment; private e-petition platforms also raise concerns about the utilisation of users' data.

The increased effectiveness of e-petitions system requires a formal response from the public authority or to develop public e-petitions systems.

The engagement of elected representatives with citizens is motivated by elections and rarely lasts throughout the political cycle, this failing to restore the eroded trust in elected

institutions. Therefore, institutional back-up for e-participation initiatives is a key factor for success. It is crucial and probably one of the biggest challenges to convince the civil servants and political leadership to interact more actively with the citizens in order to improve the quality of the work of the authorities;

E-democracy applications operating globally (eg. e-petitions, crowd-sourcing) are often proprietary with rules about authentication, content restrictions, data protection and privacy being determined by a legal regime chosen by the owner, making oversight and redress across borders difficult.

E-participation tools with weak authentication lack democratic legitimacy but strong authentication raises fears about control, freedom of expression, and surveillance.

De-territorialisation of internet-based applications and social media undermines the connection between demos and power – global media shape a global public opinion; citizens and corporations carry out transactions globally while power remains territorially limited while global institutions have little democratic legitimacy. E-consultation and e-deliberation initiatives are often disconnected from decision-making, leaving citizens disillusioned and frustrated;

Online political debate is skewed by hate speech and semantic polling techniques. Technological solutions exclude those with no access to internet or mobile devices;

e-democracy and participatory tools (eg. participatory budgeting) operate on a small scale and concern marginal decisions – internet has not yet challenged old elites at the centre of power;

Online citizens journalism raises issues with accountability, verification, transparency, objectivity and credibility. It leads to a greater information democracy but requires new guarantees for protecting citizen-journalists.

The development of new e-democracy prototypes and initiatives, especially by local authorities, should be encouraged, and successful ones should be supported in order to reach the critical mass necessary for social change.

Political parties will not cease to exist because of liquid democracy; rather they will have to reinvent themselves. They need to become more flexible, less hierarchical and more open to input on policy proposals from members and from society at large. If traditional forms of democracy and participatory democracy are seen as complementary, then liquid democracy can help political parties remind people of the merit of a democratic system over other forms of governance and thereby reinforce the notion of democracy as “politics done by the people for the people”.

Democracy is work in progress, as a system of governance it needs to continuously evolve and improve to keep up with a world that is changing faster than ever before, liquid democracy and e-participation are a part of this evolution.

The interplay between digital participation and real-life participation is essential. Technology is not sufficient to enable real impact of citizens' voices, even in the digital age. Political actors and institutions need to stimulate greater participation of citizens in more classical forms of political life.

In order for democracy to become stronger in the digital age, it is necessary to introduce safeguards and standards for e-democracy applications, to encourage parties, governments, media, NGOs and other democracy agents to make use of these tools for a greater efficiency, accountability and transparency.

Adequate level of media literacy should become universal and e-citizenship skills should be included in programmes for civic education. This should include civic responses to hate speech and awareness of digital surveillance.

International bodies should monitor and accompany the transition to democracy 2.0 through standard-setting, monitoring and transfer of good practice.

New institutional forms may need to be developed to ensure that in the democracy of tomorrow, the principle of competition is to be replaced by co-operation.

II. Background study

Exploiting the web as a tool of democracy: new ways forward in the study and practice of digital democracy

Amanda Clarke, University of Oxford

Introduction

Is democracy in decline? Voter turnout rates are dwindling, parties struggle to attract members, and citizens frequently express their mistrust of political institutions. In this context, it is certainly hard to conclude that democracy is 'alive and well'. That said, it is equally difficult to argue that democracy is in peril at a time when 'everyday citizens' talk politics in online spaces, digital technologies give citizens new opportunities to feed into the work of political institutions, online petitions receive millions of signatures, and social media are used to coordinate mass protests. 'Traditional' democratic activities are in decline, but this decline may be offset or reversed by a new brand of digital democracy that has emerged in recent years. This report explores these trends and transitions, and offers a new way forward for the study and practice of digital democracy.

Part one outlines data evidencing the decline of democratic politics in recent decades. Fewer and fewer people vote in elections, join parties, and sign petitions. At the same time, more and more people express disinterest and dissatisfaction in their politics.

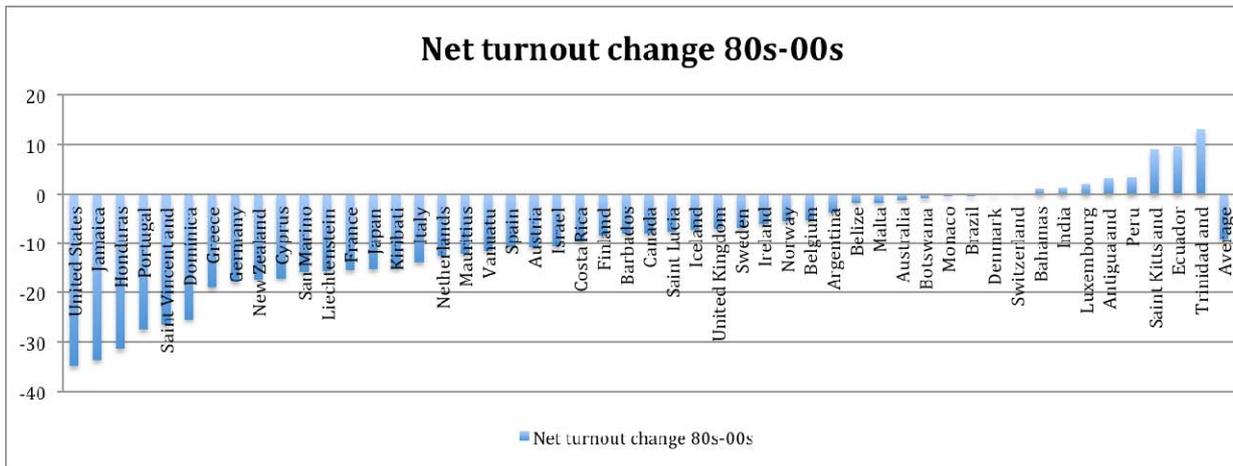
Part two outlines arguments made by early commentators on digital democracy, exploring the hopeful claims of the cyberenthusiasts, who argued that the web would revive contemporary politics, and the arguments of the cyberskeptics, whose empirical studies suggested the web was not a silver bullet solution for struggling democracies.

Part three follows the lead of recent research, and moves beyond the cyberenthusiast/cyberskeptic dichotomy that dominated early study of digital democracy. Here, the report argues that we should not evaluate the web as a tool of democracy through the lens of earlier, offline models. Rather a more fruitful line of enquiry in this field begins with a consideration of the affordances of the web, and asks how those can be exploited to bolster democratic engagement today. Adopting this approach, the report offers three examples in which the web's unique characteristics as a communications medium offer hope for democratic practice today: as a venue for politics in non-political spaces; by enabling innovative forms of citizen engagement; and as a tool through which mechanisms of democratic engagement can be better understood and evaluated.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations for researchers, civil society, and governments and legislatures, outlining how each of these players can better exploit the web as a tool of democratic engagement in the years to come.

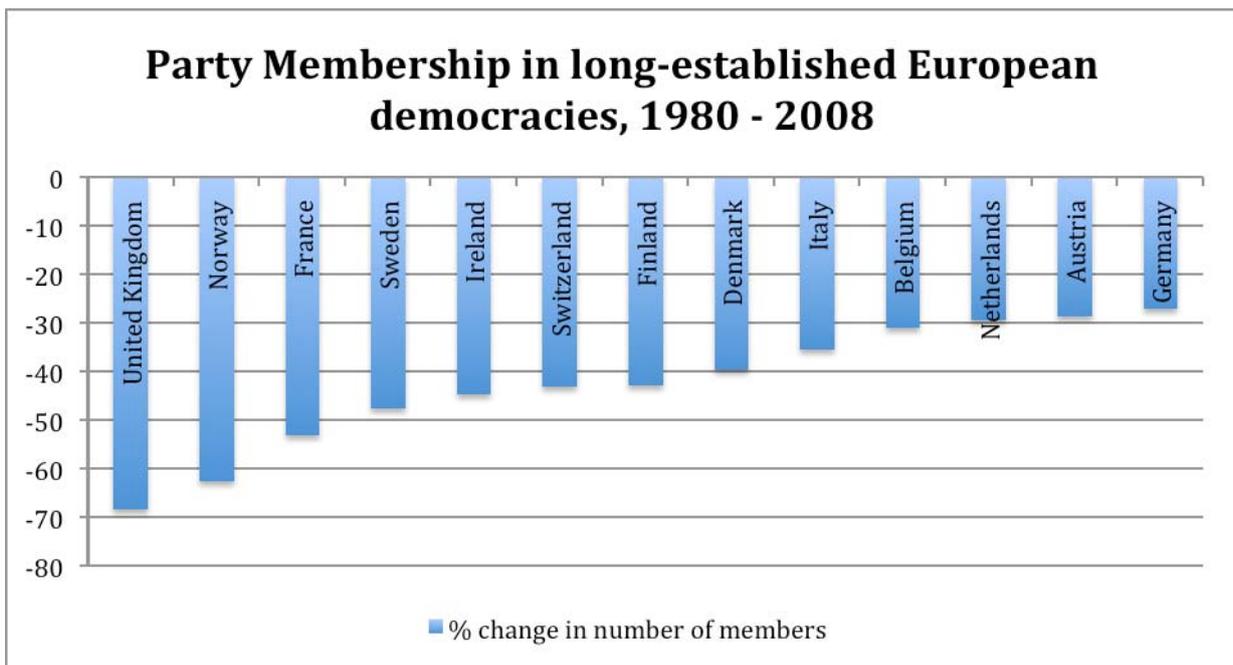
Part One — The decline of traditional democratic politics

Turnout in democratic elections across the world has, on average, declined since 1980. Of 49 democracies, 40 saw turnout decline in elections to national parliaments between 1980-84 and 2007-2013. On average, turnout declined by ten percentage points across these 49 countries.ⁱⁱ

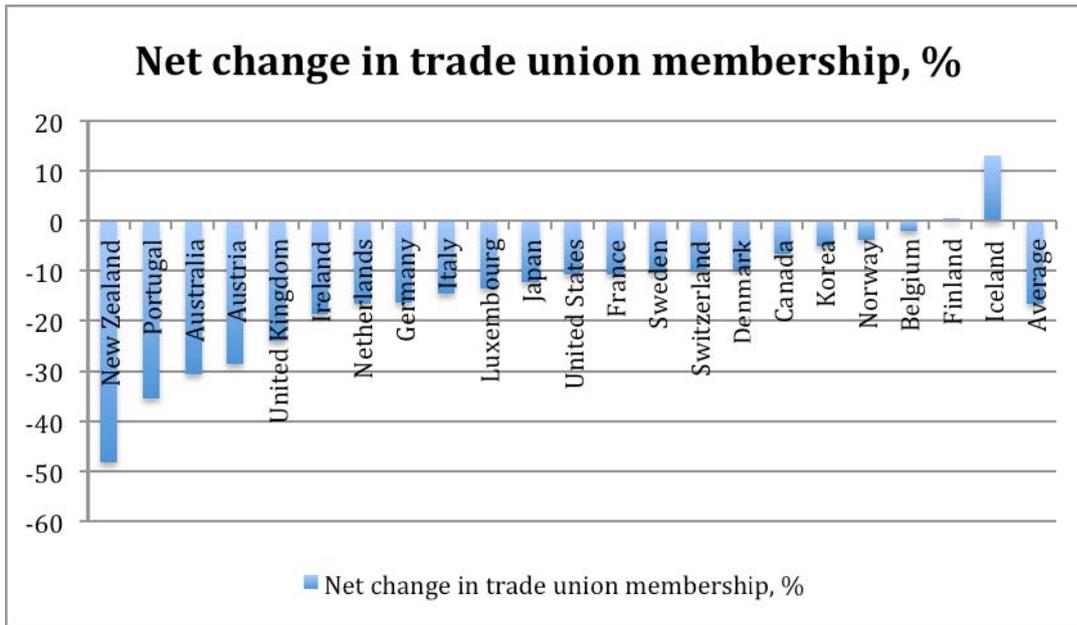


Research focusing on the African continent echoes this trend. From 2000-2009, turnout in general elections across a selection of African countries declined by 5 percentage points.ⁱⁱⁱ

Drops in voter turnout are not surprising given dwindling levels of trust in the political parties listed on election ballots. From 1990 to 2006, those who reported having a 'great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence in political parties dropped from 49% to 27%.^{iv} This may explain why membership to political parties has also declined substantially over the past few decades, especially in Europe. 13 long-established European democracies all show a steep decline in membership.^v

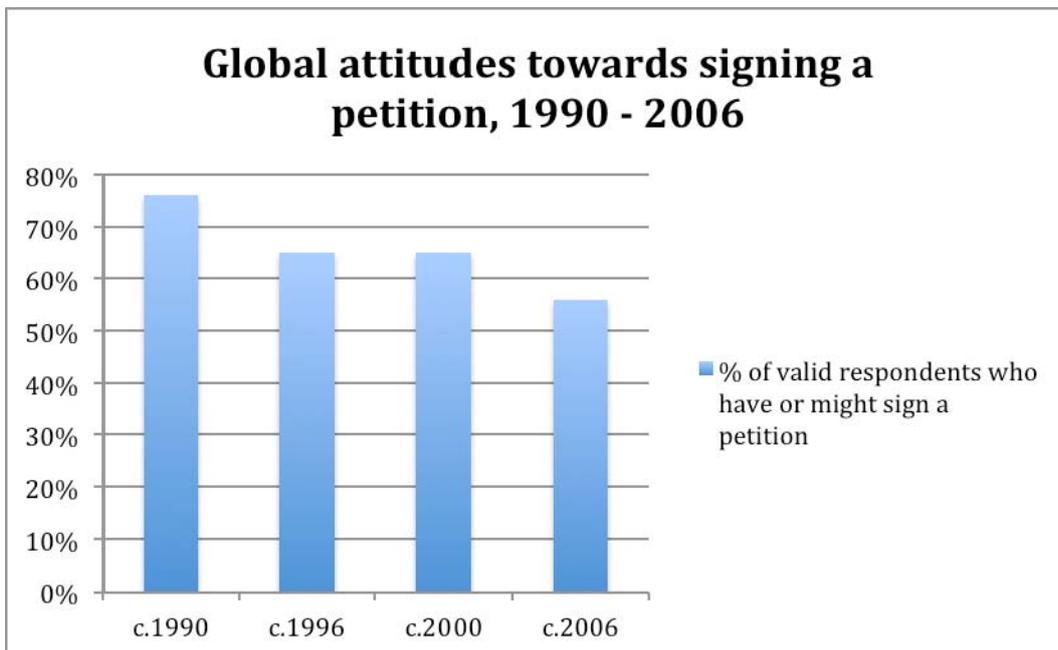


Of course, political parties are not the only associations that provide venues for political engagement. Trade unions, for example, have also traditionally fulfilled this role. Unfortunately, trends here are equally concerning. Since 1980, the proportion of salary earners that are trade union members has dropped in all but two cases across 22 nations surveyed by the OECD. On average, trade union membership in these countries declined by 14 percentage points.^{vi}

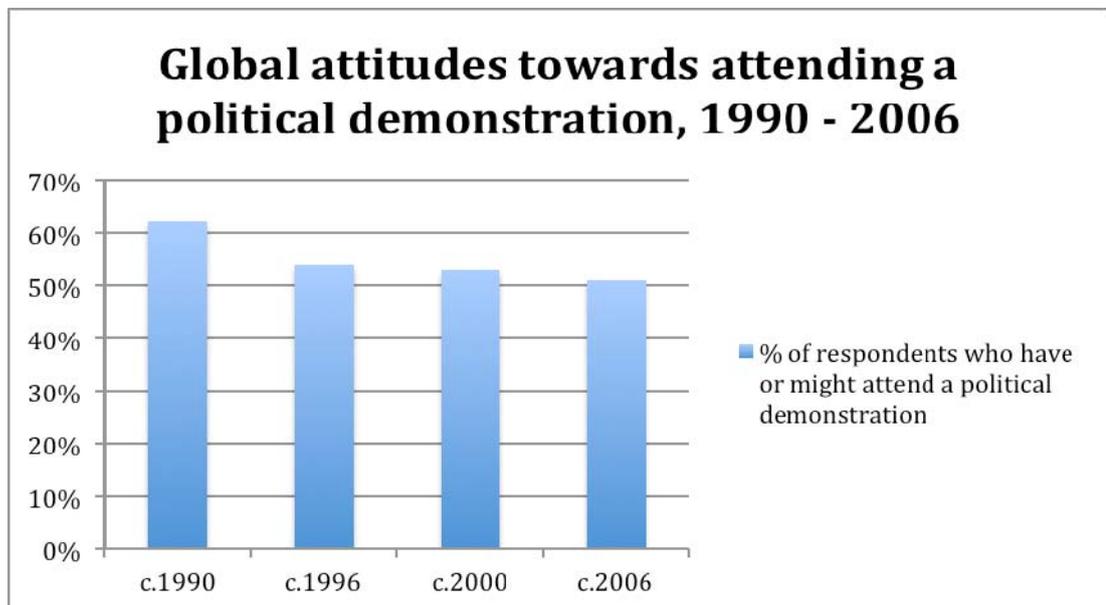
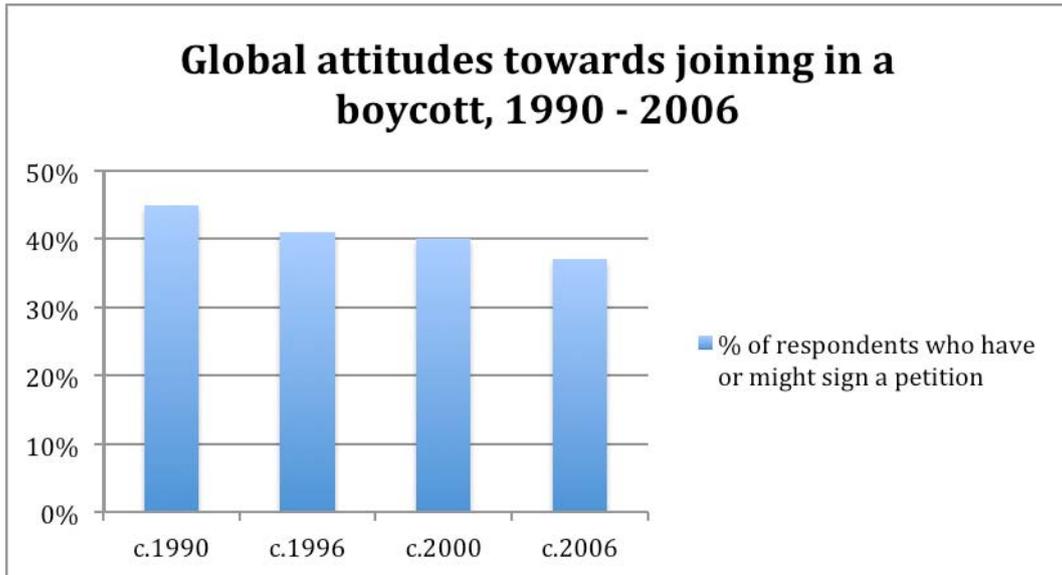


The data is equally daunting if we consider individuals' willingness to engage in traditional democratic activities like petition signing, boycotting, and attendance at demonstrations.

Between the late 80s and the late 2000s, those who reported that they might, or have already, signed a petition, dropped 20 percentage points, from 76% to just over half, at 56%.vii

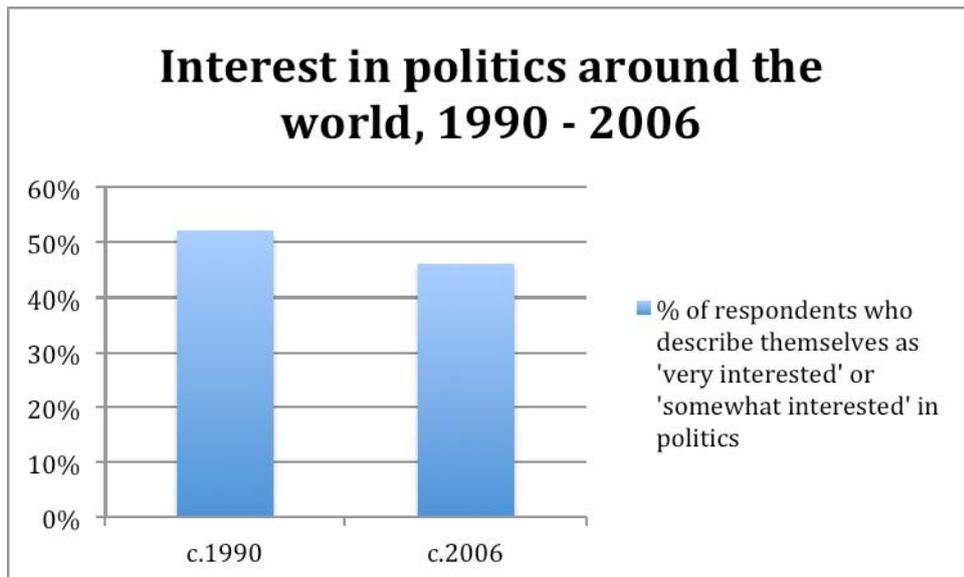


Similarly, fewer and fewer people have joined or would join a boycott or attend a political demonstration, two classic modes of offline participation that have traditionally undergirded healthy democracies. Here the declines are less striking, but the general downward trend remains. Whereas 45% of people said that they might, or had participated in, a boycott in the early 1990s, only 37% said the same in the late mid-late 2000s. Over the same period of time, those who said they had or might participate in a political demonstration dropped from 62% to 51%.viii

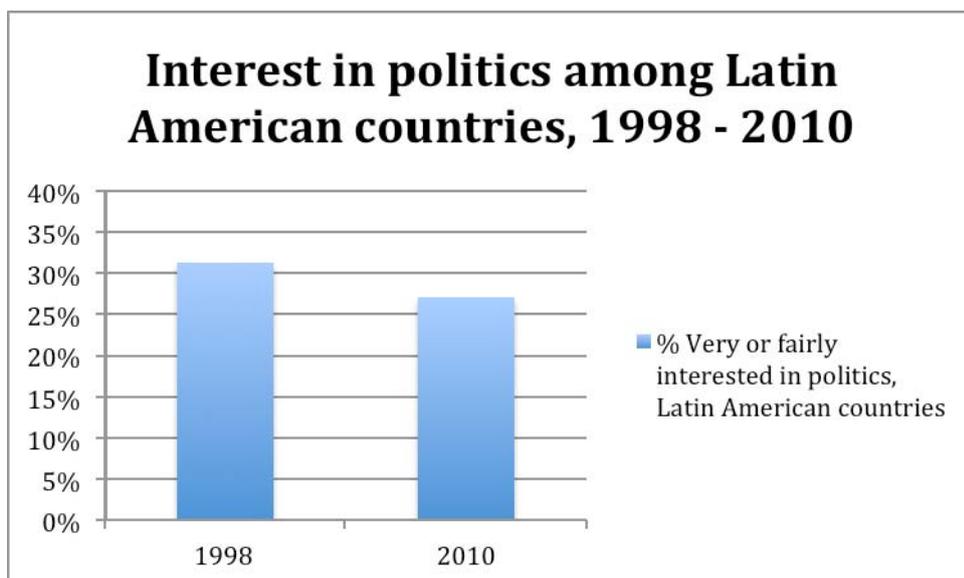


Turning from activities to attitudes, downward trends continue. In this case, attitudes toward politics have degraded less steeply than other trends discussed. However, attitudes towards politics were so low to begin with, that the less striking decline is hardly cause for comfort.

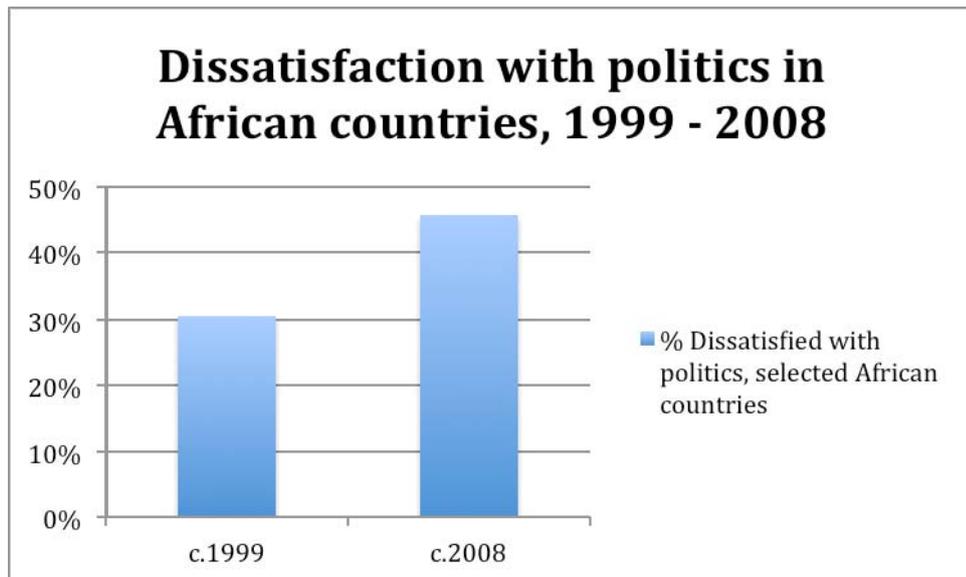
In the early 90s, the World Values Survey reported that, globally, only 52% of respondents would describe themselves as 'very interested' or 'somewhat interested' in politics. By the mid-late 2000s, this figure had dropped to 46%.ix



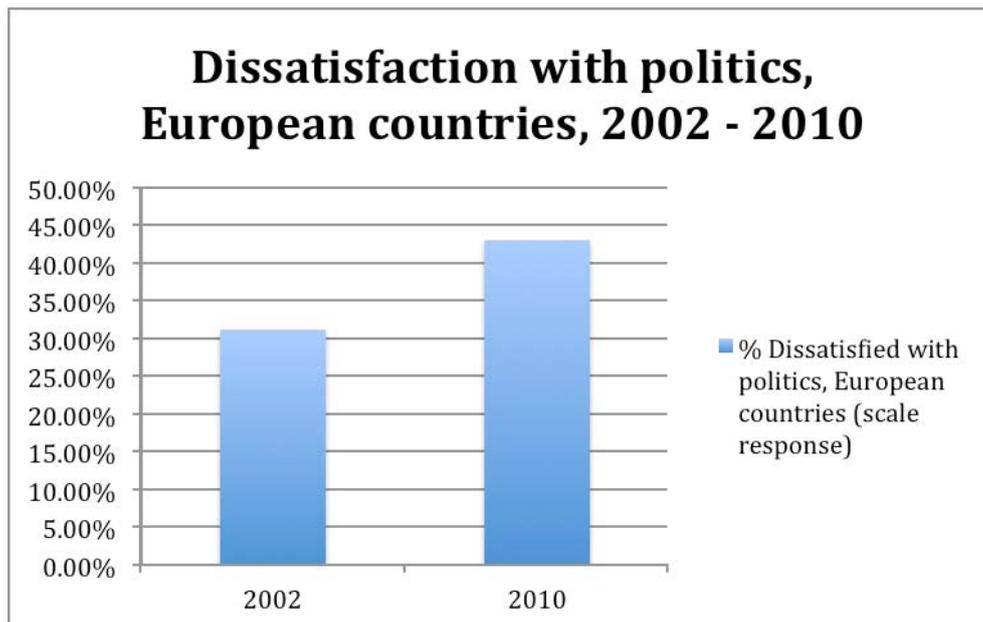
Regionally focused studies also exhibit this trend. In 1998, a mere 31% of Latin Americans described themselves as 'very' or 'fairly' interested in politics. In 2010, this percentage dropped even lower, to 27%.^x



As interest in politics declines globally, regional studies also suggest that dissatisfaction with politics has risen. For example, across twelve African countries^{xi}, dissatisfaction with politics rose by 15 percentage points over a ten-year period. In 1999, 31% of Africans surveyed were dissatisfied with politics. By 2008, this figure rose to 46% of those surveyed.^{xii}



The picture is no rosier in Europe. The proportion of Europeans that reported being dissatisfied with politics rose 12 percentage points, from 31% to 43 %, between 2002 and 2010.



Of course, ‘dissatisfaction with politics’ is certainly not the enemy of democracy. Far from it—some of history’s democratic triumphs were born of extreme dissatisfaction with the politics of the day. This logic was not lost on the earliest commentators on the Internet and democracy, many of whom assumed that the web would usher in a new brand of politics that dissatisfied citizens would eagerly adopt, reversing the worrying trends explored so far.

Part Two — The rise and decline of cyberenthusiasm

In the early phases of widespread Internet use, academics, governments, think tanks and media outlets argued that the web would usher in a new age of democratic participation,

remedying the worrying trends witnessed in preceding decades. These so-called 'cyberenthusiasts' argued their case along a number of lines.

Some focused on the web's capacity to host deliberative dialogues amongst large groups of individuals, and argued that this would improve upon standard consultation and engagement practices at work in governing institutions, thereby proving more appealing to citizens disillusioned by these older practices.

Others argued that the web, with its capacity to host rapid real-time, anywhere, interactions would enable citizens and their political leaders to interact more regularly and openly. The effects would be threefold. Citizens would be better able to communicate their needs and preferences to their political representatives. Having received this input, these representatives would make better decisions that more accurately reflected the will of the people, and citizens, in turn, would develop a greater sense of trust in their political system.

In other cases, cyberenthusiasts focused on the web as a democratic publishing platform. In particular, blogging was seen as a powerful tool that would give alternative perspectives an audience, contributing to a more competitive marketplace of political ideas than had been offered by traditional media. In addition to empowering the formerly voiceless, this new marketplace of ideas would give consumers of political information a broader menu to choose from, leading to a more pluralistic form of politics.

In many cases, cyberenthusiasts dwelled on the concept of 'digital natives', a term that some have applied to the millennial generation given the ubiquitous role that information communication technologies (ICTs) tend to play in the lives of those born from the early 1980s onwards. Drawing on this concept, authors argued that the Internet would prove particularly potent as a means of engaging youth, whose withdrawal from traditional offline politics had been well documented. According to this argument, the web would give youth a politics that was more in tune with their expectations and preferences.

And finally, a number of commentators predicted that the virtues generated by online political activity would carry over to offline politics. Participation in digital democracy would be a gateway to participation in analogue democracy, raising voter turnout rates and engagement with political institutions such as parties and legislatures.

Of course, the data presented in Part One of this report suggest that the Internet has not been a panacea for the complex, intertwined, and deeply-rooted conditions that have undermined the quality of traditional democratic participation over the past few decades. The advent of the Internet did not fix democratic politics, despite rhetoric suggesting otherwise.

This reality provides fodder for a number of critiques of these early cyberenthusiast accounts, as so-called 'cyberskeptics' note that the rise of Internet access has not caused spikes in 'real world' politics such as voting rates and party membership.^{xiii}

Similarly, researchers have argued that the Internet has not necessarily been a causal factor in youth's decision to participate in politics, as often, young people participating in digital politics are already active in offline politics. At the same time, disengaged youth do not suddenly become interested in politics because it moves online^{xiv}. Coupled with research that questions young people's digital literacy, arguments that rely on assumptions about 'digital natives' and political engagement have largely been discredited.^{xv}

Other cyberskeptics invoke data that question the extent to which opportunities for online citizen engagement are enjoyed equally by different segments of the population, noting that those who engage online are often the same as those that engage offline^{xvi}. In this case, the Internet might actually broaden the gap between those who are politically active and those

that are not as the former benefit from new opportunities to participate in their democracies via the web, and the latter continue on with life as usual.

Similarly, other researchers argue that far from generating a more pluralistic form of politics, the web merely reinforces divisive partisanship by creating ‘echo chambers’ of political ideology, and empowering already dominant political voices, such as the mainstream media and political parties, while marginalizing those outside traditional centers of political power.^{xvii}

Suffice to say, the cyberskeptics offer a decidedly less hopeful analysis of the Internet’s potential as a tool of political participation than that which was promised by early commentators on digital democracy. Their analyses suggest that politics online is ‘politics as usual’, with few democratic benefits flowing from digitally-enabled political participation.

Part Three — Beginning with the web, and ending with democracy: a new approach to digital democracy

While the cyberskeptics should be commended for bringing more nuanced and evidence-based analyses to the study of digital democracy, we should not necessarily discount the web as a tool of democracy simply because it does not meet the overblown expectations that characterized early discussions in this area. Recognizing this point, researchers working in the field of digital democracy have, for the most part, moved beyond the strict enthusiast/skeptic dichotomy that shaped earlier debates, acknowledging that the web plays a role in democracy, but that the magnitude and nature of that role is unclear. More and more nuance is added to the discussion, as researchers ask, ‘Do social media foster engagement more than static websites do?’; ‘Does digital democracy vary in its effects by level of government/issue/region/characteristics of participant?’; ‘How are political parties/legislatures/governments using the web to engage the public?’. In some cases, researchers find that the Internet enriches democracy, in others, its effects are found to be neutral or even detrimental to democracy.

Despite variation in their focus and conclusions, what ties so many of these studies together—and indeed, what links them back into early enthusiast/skeptic debates—is their attempts to measure digital democracy by the standards of offline democracy; researchers focus on classic offline political activities and evaluate them as they are translated into digital form. Accordingly the gaze of these researchers is typically confined to traditional political institutions, such as parties, legislatures and governments; to traditional political actors, such as elected representatives, activists, and advocacy groups; and to traditional democratic activities, such as explicit political debate, and participation in protest or consultations.

This may seem a reasonable starting point. These researchers are, after all, attempting to determine how the Internet supports or undermines our traditions of democracy. On the other hand, the web has proven itself most powerful when we do not simply digitize offline phenomena, but instead, re-imagine old traditions, and create new ones by capitalizing on the unique affordances of this communications medium. Wikipedia has become a much-used resource because it capitalizes on the web’s capacity to host low-cost information exchange and collaboration, and not because it digitized the production and distribution models of offline encyclopedias. Amazon is not simply a digital version of an analogue bookstore, but instead exploits the web’s affordances to crowdsource reviews and better understand its customers.

What are the web’s affordances exactly? Or, put differently, what is the web ‘good at’? The web enables network effects; the production, collection and analysis of large-scale datasets that describe our activities online (big data); and reduces the costs of identifying and

coordinating large numbers of actors with shared interests and goals. If we begin a discussion of digital democracy by considering these affordances, we can identify a new range of activities and practices that serve democracy in ways that digital democracy research has, thus far, largely ignored. Three examples are explored here.

a. Politics in non-political spaces

Reduced barriers to identifying and coordinating likeminded individuals in forums, blogs, and via Twitter hashtags not only enable even the most niche groups of individuals to build thriving online communities, but also, for these communities to host inconspicuous ‘everyday politics’. Scott Wright, a professor at the University of Leicester (UK) has discussed this phenomenon, noting that non-political spaces online can become sites for those typically disengaged from politics to discuss the issues of the day as they relate to themselves and their online community’s interests^{xviii}. The UK’s Mumsnet^{xix} is a strong example of such ‘politics in non-political spaces’. A forum originally intended to serve as a venue for parents to share parenting tips and support, this site has become a hub for parents to engage in political debates on issues such as food labeling, childcare policies, and advertising aimed at children. In this case, a site that is not conspicuously ‘political’ provides mothers—a busy demographic that can be difficult to engage—with a gateway into current political debates. That said, as most studies of digital democracy look for traditional offline political activities as they manifest online, sites like Mumsnet rarely fall on their radar. Studies instead evaluate the Internet’s role in democracy by looking at political blogs, news sites, and explicitly political groups on Twitter and Facebook. These are important sites of enquiry, to be sure, but they only tell part of the story.

b. Breaking the mold: alternative modes of political participation

Researchers have tended to evaluate digital democracy with pre-conceived notions about ‘what counts’ as democratic engagement. Studies evaluate the extent to which the web supports models of deliberative, direct and representative democracy, theories and practices that have well-established traditions in the world of offline politics. However, if we consider what ‘the web is good at’—reducing costs of coordination and the real-time exchange of rich data—a broad new range of engagement models arise which do not fit neatly into the models inherited from offline politics. For example, the Air Quality Egg^{xx}, a small, egg-shaped sensor that takes geo-tagged readings of air quality and sends these via the web to a central database, has opened up a new avenue by which citizens can engage in politics. The Air Quality Egg’s effectiveness depends on it being present in many different parts of a region. Hence, its creators devised it such that it could be ‘adopted’ by citizens, who keep the eggs at their homes to generate air quality readings. This is a relatively passive act of participation, and when evaluated using traditional models of democratic engagement, it would likely not fit the bill. Citizens are not engaging in deliberative dialogue about their preferences and needs, nor are they directly voting on a policy issue, or advocating to a politician to represent their interests. Yet, by participating in the scheme, individuals contribute to a larger advocacy effort, helping build the datasets required to put air quality on the agenda of decision-makers, and to inform smarter public policy in this area.

Sites like FixMyStreet^{xxi} follow a similar model. Here, web developers at the UK’s MySociety^{xxii} offer the public a platform through which they can easily report problems like potholes and graffiti to local councils. Again, the initiative capitalizes on the web’s capacity to host real-time, low-cost information exchange. Again, the act itself does not fit the mold of traditional acts of democratic engagement. Yet, as is the case with the Air Quality Egg, individuals that feed into FixMyStreet are contributing back to their communities, drawing on the Internet to inform the decisions and actions of decision makers in ways not possible before the web and related technologies.

c. The Internet as research tool

The web has proven itself a powerful research tool, both as a platform from which impressive amounts of data can be harvested, and as a platform on which innovative research can be conducted. Given these affordances, the Internet should be viewed not only as a tool of democratic engagement, but also as a tool for studying and evaluating such engagement.

Some scholars have begun to capitalize on this potential. The Oxford Internet Institute and the London School of Economics' 'Government on the web'^{xxiii} project used web-based experiments to better understand the conditions under which individuals are likely to participate in collective action, such as joining a protest, or donating to a cause. They identified psychological variables at play in such decisions, as well as a role for social information cues in promoting participation (for example, notifying potential participants how many others had already contributed.)^{xxiv}

These researchers also use big data scraped from the web to better understand the dynamics of collection action. In one study, analysis of data harvested from over 8000 petitions hosted on an E-petition site revealed that the number of signatures received on a petition's first day is an important factor in determining its long-term success, meaning that the most successful petitions get lots of support early on.^{xxv}

In these examples, the web gives researchers a platform for conducting research (in the case of experiments), and a new source of data (in the case of the petition study), from which important insight into the mechanics of collective action can be drawn. Such research can then feed into the design of engagement initiatives, both offline and online, with the aim of increasing participation rates. If digital technologies continue to play a key coordinating role in protest in the future, as was the case in the recent Occupy movement, the Arab awakening, and in protests against tuition hikes and austerity measures, research such as this will become ever more important. In this case, the web will not only prove important to protest movements for its role as a coordinating device, but also because of the insight it offers into the levers that must be pulled for such protest to gain widespread momentum.

In addition to the insight the web gives into the dynamics of citizens' democratic participation, the Internet also provides new tools and data that can be used to study the institutions governing these citizens, providing a new avenue to hold these institutions to account. Researchers use hyperlink analysis to determine which types of organizations political parties link to on their official websites, revealing the issues and ideologies informing parties' mandates^{xxvi}. Other researchers harvest data from government social media accounts, and use this data to determine who governments network with online, what types of information they share (and withhold), and the extent to which such channels are used for meaningful engagement with the public.^{xxvii} As parties, legislatures and governments continue to grow their online presences, the data trails these efforts produce will provide new and important avenues for researchers, journalists and citizens when they scrutinize political institutions.

The three examples listed above suggest that a more fruitful discussion of the web as a tool of democracy begins not by a consideration of traditional democratic activities, and the role of the web therein. Rather, when we begin with a consideration of the web's unique affordances, a new range of democratic applications arise, all of which are born in some way of these affordances. So, what is the web good at? It helps people with common concerns establish communities, which can, in some cases, enable political engagement to emerge in non-political spaces. The web also reduces barriers to coordination and information exchange, opening new avenues for citizens to contribute to their governing institutions in non-conventional ways. Finally, the web is a powerful research platform, offering sources of data and tools of analysis that shed new light on old problems plaguing our democracies, and whose insights could greatly improve the design of engagement initiatives in the years to come.

Building on the examples explored here, the final section offers recommendations for researchers, civil society, and governments and legislatures, urging these actors to think more creatively and productively about the affordances of the web, and the ways in which these affordances can be exploited to strengthen democracy today.

Part Four — Recommendations

- Researchers need to expand their toolkits to include the web as a new source of data and a new platform of research when approaching the topic of digital democracy. Researchers will likely need to adopt more interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to this field, drawing on fields such as computer science, and skills such as social network analysis to make sense of digital democracy. In conducting such research, academics should not restrict their gaze to traditional political activities alone, but should instead think more broadly about the non-intuitive, unconventional activities and venues that facilitate democratic engagement online. Researchers should remain mindful of the need to develop policy recommendations from their findings. Civil society, governments and legislatures often lack the evidence they need to make good choices about the design and execution of engagement initiatives. There is much room for collaboration between academia and these other sectors in this respect.
- Civil society groups should examine the strategies currently used to encourage and facilitate their engagement with members of the public. In many cases, civil society groups have merely used the web to digitize older practices, by, for example, replacing letters with email updates. Crowdsourcing, crowdfunding, and viral social media campaigns offer potentially powerful engagement opportunities, yet these tactics are still not routine in the sector. In addition to better engaging with members of the public, civil society groups can also use the web as a platform to better hold governments and legislatures to account. As more and more political activity moves online, the actions of decision-makers leave behind digital trails in the form of tweets, hyperlinks, and website content. By collecting, analyzing, and publicizing conclusions drawn from these digital trails, civil society is afforded greater scope to scrutinize decision makers, and to strengthen the quality of democratic representation.
- Governments and legislatures should recognize that they no longer have a monopoly in the business of democratic engagement; the web offers citizens many new venues to which their participation can be directed. While the proliferation of new opportunities for engagement is encouraging, it remains problematic that citizens are decreasingly willing to engage with more traditional institutions of democracy, as outlined at the beginning of this report. Mumsnet and the Air Quality Egg offer intriguing new forums for participation, but it is also important that people show up to vote in elections. After all, at least in the foreseeable future, the traditional institutions of democracy will remain formidable actors in the political system.

To re-engage the public in these institutions, governments and legislatures must think more creatively about the web's potential as a platform for engagement, instead of simply taking older mechanisms of engagement, such as consultations and townhalls, and merely replicating them online. Likewise, governments and legislatures should not assume that the public will necessarily want to engage on their terms or in their spaces; if the web gives citizens new venues to discuss political issues, then governments and legislatures need to find these venues, and take part.

On a similar note, these institutions must make better use of the web as a source of aggregate data describing the preferences and needs of the citizens they represent. Systematic analyses of web data are being used by some governments as part of

controversial intelligence gathering programs, but public sector agencies and legislatures could also use these methods to 'take the pulse of the people', and ensure the political agenda is more broadly representative of the issues people care about.

Adding training in computer programming, civic app development, and digital literacy to school civics programs could equip younger generations with the skills they need to become active digital citizens. And finally, by drawing insight from emerging research exploring the mechanics of collective action, governments and legislatures can develop new models of voting, party membership and direct participation that are more appealing to citizens. This may reverse some of the worrying trends explored at the start of this report, trends which will inspire much of the discussion at the Council of Europe's World Forum for Democracy.

III. FORUM PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Opening session – 27 November 2013

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, opened the Forum and announced the guests of honour **Roland Ries**, Senator-Mayor of Strasbourg and Lilla Merabet, Regional Councillor in Alsace and Vice-President of the "Youth, Social Economy and Solidarity" Commission. The Secretary General thanked the City of Strasbourg, the Alsace Region and the French Government as they are the Council of Europe's main partners in the organisation of the World Forum. Without them, this event would not have been possible.

The Secretary General recalled the theme of this second edition of the Forum: "Rewiring democracy – connecting institutions and citizens in the digital age" and evoked the paper prepared for the Forum by **Amanda Clarke** from the University of Oxford which points to a worldwide decline in the level of trust in our political systems. Voter turnout rates and party membership are falling across the world. What we are witnessing is not only political apathy but a sense of betrayal felt by ordinary citizens towards their leaders.

The Secretary General invited the Forum participants from more than 100 countries - academics and activists, politicians and programmers as well as bloggers, journalists, dissidents, think-tankers and representatives of civil society – to share their inspiring stories and their vision for the future. He asked them to assess the impact of digital participation initiatives and discuss the potential risks facing the integrity of democracy. He urged them to seek answers to questions such as how do we take advantage of the benefits of the digital revolution so that we can regain citizens' trust in political bodies; what role does the Internet play in democracy at a time when traditional democratic activities are on the decline; and, above all, the question of how to bridge the gap between citizens and institutions.

Hélène Conway-Mouret, Minister Delegate for French Nationals Abroad, attached to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that democracy is constantly changing and as such, influenced by new communication technologies. She criticised that inequalities have arisen which favour hate speech online. In order to avoid hardened societal discourses, democracy needs to be cultivated on a daily basis. Every citizen should feel concerned because democracy consists first and foremost of debate and exchange. In this context, the forum serves as a response to the crisis of democracy as it offers a global platform for dialogue. This is particularly important because the means of communication have changed in recent years, leading to a public sphere which is now available for everyone and in which information circulates without borders. It is a duty of politicians to meet citizens with the help of these new tools. They offer a unique opportunity to integrate a maximum number of individuals, as long as the digital divide can be overcome. Concluding, one needs to make sure to embrace the opportunities of the internet but should not forget about the risks.

Abdou Diouf, Secretary General of La Francophonie, raised the question whether the internet is revolutionising democratic practice. He pointed out that democracy, in the ongoing effort of adaptation that characterises it, cannot remain on the sidelines of the revolution of information technology and communication that has profoundly and irreversibly marked the times we live in. Therefore, one needs to determine the place and features we want to entrust the internet with, which is ultimately a tool among others in the service of democracy. New technologies can contribute to saving the essence of democracy by offering opportunities for interaction with politicians, as well as access to debates, municipal documents, parliamentarians, and the government. They break the isolation of citizens by

promoting the creation of communities around shared concerns and aspirations, foster the emergence of public opinion and a transnational civil society and contribute through worldwide networking to the exchange of experiences and expertise. Shortcomings of the internet include its restriction to a portion of the world's population, violations of privacy, and the dissemination of rumours. Therefore, it is important to establish a genuine international democracy based on the acceptance of interdependence and on the belief that the inefficiency of the solitary exercise of power by states, constrained in their borders, must give way to the effectiveness of the collective exercise of power through institutions, international and regional organisations, giving them real democratic legitimacy and representativeness.

Amin Maalouf, author and member of the Académie Française, criticized the increasing gap between electoral processes and political decision-making. The election of leaders affects only slightly the policy outcome and the voice of the people is often disregarded. In some countries, the coexistence of people with different religious, cultural or language backgrounds is problematic and needs to be improved in order to build an inclusive and harmonious democracy. Growing mistrust of authorities in an atmosphere of economic hardship and social gloom poses another threat to democracy. New technologies enable citizens to voice their opinions in real time, and to form associations to defend their ideas and rights. There is an enormous potential inherent in these tools, but also some limitations. They allow for mobilisation of the most dynamic elements of societies, but often fail to replace old political elites at the centers of power. Nevertheless, it is important to create mechanisms that allow citizens to participate effectively in political decision-making. Mr Maalouf concluded that, in this regard, the forum can significantly contribute to the necessary rescue of democracy.

Irina Yasina, journalist and civil society activist, condemned the ongoing political development in Russia, namely, for example, the suppression of opposition speech and the extension of the term of office of the Parliament and the President. She also criticized the indifference of most people in Europe towards these authoritarian trends. Following the recent decisions by the Russian authorities, parts of the Russian population gathered increasingly on the streets protesting for freedom. The internet facilitated these manifestations as it offered citizens the possibility to connect with people who share their ideals. Ms Yasina concluded her speech by depicting two different kinds of Russia: one Russia is engaged in democratic development and charity, the other Russia is building vast monopolies, investing billions in megaprojects. It remains to be seen which Russia will develop faster, keeping in mind that the growth of the first is directly related to the decay of the second.

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Debate on citizen participation in the digital age: trends and prospects 27 November 2013

Jean-Claude Mignon, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, opened the round table discussion on 27th November by stating that society must be in constant movement. Technologies should be used to increase communication and contact between elected officials and citizens. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has understood that it is important to improve the dialogue with 800 million citizens that it represents. In this regard, internet and technologies are important tools but cannot replace elected representatives as they are the only truly legitimate institution.

The discussion started with Lois Beckett, Reporter for ProPublica, who pointed out that President Obama's election campaign analysed digital background data of voters in a number of categories with a ranking from 1 to 100: the likelihood to vote in general, the likelihood that the persons votes for President Obama, the chance to mobilise the person through a campaign, how likely it would be to persuade them to vote for President Obama, etc. Hence, a tremendous effort was made to analyse extensive campaigning data. On the other hand, there was a huge failure to establish a proper website for the government reform programme, HealthCare.gov. From this, Ms Beckett concluded that citizens communicate with elected officials with 21st century means. However, the governments use 20th century tools to listen to the citizens and only 19th century methods for actual governance.

Robert Bjarnason, Co-Founder of the Citizens Foundation of Iceland, added that there is a general decline in traditional forms of participation. The reason why people do not vote anymore is because they think that it does not matter who they elect. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, technology has changed the world and how we work. Evermore issues arise today in four years of a legislative period. Consequently, it is difficult for politicians to keep the promises they made when they were elected as many other problems have to be tackled in between. Moreover, globalisation and the impact of corporations give politicians less influence. Therefore, there is the need for a global democracy which goes hand in hand with globalisation. Working with electronic democracy offers a way to turn this development around in order to make citizens participate on an ongoing basis and to complement representative democracy to evolve it and restore people's faith in it.

Adam Nyman, Director of Debating Europe, complemented Mr Bjarnason's statement by adding that it is a myth that young people are not interested in policy-making. In fact, they just need a channel on which to engage with policy makers. On Debating Europe, citizen's questions are forwarded to policy makers and in this way a debate is started. People want to be engaged. However, they think that parties are not concerned with their problems anymore and decisions are made behind closed doors. Mr Nyman's key message was that it is in the hands of political parties to engage with citizens throughout the political cycle so that citizens conceive that their engagement counts and that their voice is heard. Otherwise, political parties will lose their grassroots base.

Mikhail Fedotov, Advisor to the President of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the Council of the President of the Russian Federation for Civil Society and Human Rights, emphasized the importance to understand that it is dangerous to have an instrumental attitude towards the internet. The internet should rather be seen as a new sphere of human life. One should not be completely utilitarian in the approach towards the internet. Society is less and less interested in traditional representative democracy because it no longer gives satisfaction and because democratic institutions often do not play a big role anymore. For example, during the "Stuttgart 21" manifestations in Germany, thousands of people took to the street because institutions did not react to their demands. This new kind of direct action democracy, combined with new technologies, brings a new type of citizen to the political arena: the sovereign citizen. Every citizen can sit in front of their computer and write a newspaper, create a television channel, or become a social or political activist. The difference from the normal political space is that the internet sphere does not know any boundaries. Electronic democracy grows out of traditional democracy and develops it. The two are not antagonists, they are a continuum.

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Plenary debate “Democracy in Motion” – 28 November 2013

Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, opened the session by introducing the challenges to citizen participation raised by the study carried out for the World Forum by Amanda Clarke from the Oxford Internet Institute. The challenge of democratic transformation is relevant across the world – it is therefore important to address it through a global dialogue involving the classical democratic actors – politicians, civil society activists and media, but also new actors such as e-democracy platform developers and new media opinion leaders.

Are digital participation platforms good or bad for democracy? How can we encourage the good and limit the bad? What practical steps and actions should governments, parties, legislatures, grassroots actors, media take to take up new opportunities and deal with challenges? What should international bodies do to monitor and accompany the transition to democracy 2.0? These were the questions that were kept in mind during the debates which took place during the following two days. But before delving into the specifics of e-democracy, the Deputy Secretary General invited two distinguished experts – one from academia and one from politics – to share their reactions to the panel discussion of yesterday evening and their views on the way in which democracy evolves and the role of digital communication technologies in this process.

In her speech at the World Forum for Democracy on 28 November, **Mary Kaldor**, Professor of Global Governance at the London School of Economics, stated that social life is currently in the midst of a profound transition. As governing institutions fail to adapt to these profound changes, there is a need to rethink democracy, in particular in terms of the digital age.

Professor Kaldor distinguished between formal or procedural and substantive democracy. The former describes objective values of democracy such as the rule of law, freedom of speech, or civil society whereas the latter refers to subjective values, as for example the societal condition, the “habits of the hearts” and the ability to influence political decision-making. As more and more countries become democratic, there is a dramatic global increase in formal democracy which corresponds to the higher level of interconnectivity among states. However, formal democracy does not correlate with substantive democracy. This creates a democratic gap.

The reason for this gap lies mainly in globalisation: As decisions that affect citizens are not taken at the national level anymore, governments are not able to correspond to popular demand. There is a need to establish a link between global institutions and citizens. Information technologies can be a useful tool for this undertaking. The primary purpose of global institutions is to correspond to global problems in order to protect citizens from the “storm of globalisation” and to enable them to benefit from the advantages globalisation brings about. The European Union, for example, should protect us from financial speculation and youth unemployment and at the same time offer peace and social security. It does not matter so much how we use the internet but what we use it for. Professor Kaldor concluded by depicting two scenarios. In a dystopia, the internet is used for mass surveillance, to control people, to maintain market discipline and to increase authoritarianism. In a utopian world, the internet offers greater accountability and increases citizen participation.

Robert Walter, Member of Parliament, United Kingdom, Chairperson of the European Democrat Group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, emphasised that the Council of Europe was constructed out of the ashes of the Second World War. Today, 47 nations subscribe to the values of the institution. Some of them are still

on their way to democracy, but what exactly is representative democracy and what are the democratic institutions this house should protect?

Bill Gates predicted that the digital age will change representative democracy. Much of the world lives online now. The way politicians act has also changed: they need to react instantly and be more responsive. Moreover, the rise of e-petitions is transforming the relation between government and citizens. E-democracy proponents see those challenges as positive and may even wish to replace politicians.

Mr Walter recognised that there is a crisis of confidence and that representatives need to improve the way they engage in order to strengthen transparency. At the same time, digital democracy will not and should not be a replacement for established mechanisms of representative democracy. Social Media neither serve democracy in a fully transparent and fair way, nor do they replace democratic elections.

Online consultation, however, is giving people an excellent way to participate in legislation-procedures and offers a platform to introduce new topics. The political dialogue created on e-petition platforms is a huge step forward in the relation between officials and citizens, acknowledging at the same time the primacy of parliamentarians in the law-making process and enabling citizens to make proposals and vote. However, as the majority of people is not in the position to fine-tune the details of policy-making, the need for solid parliamentary debate remains. Mr Walter concluded that we need to continue working with new technologies, to strengthen democratic institutions, engage citizens in politics through new forms of participation, and help parliaments to reinvent themselves in order to maintain accountable institutions.

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LABS

Following the plenary session, the forum continued with the 21 labs where 33 e-participation initiatives were presented and critically assessed for their relevance, impact, sustainability and transferability. Their potential for fostering youth participation was scrutinised by the youth representatives participating in the Forum. Youth representatives had prepared their participation via an online discussion forum.

The labs were well attended and assessed by participants as a real success. Despite requiring participants to make a difficult choice between 10 or 11 options each day, the lab format and methodology were very much appreciated. They were considered as being well prepared, rich in content and interactive.

The Labs were organised around 4 themes:

<h3>Theme 1: Alternatives to Representative Democracy?</h3>
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Representative democracy, as a dominant model of democracy architecture, is being challenged by decreasing citizen trust and participation, the fragmentation of power and the emergence of new actors which use information technologies to improve the direct involvement of people in policy-making through, inter alia, e-petitions, e-deliberation, and monitoring of institutions' performance. The most pressing question in this context is how to reconcile alternative, novel forms of democratic governance with traditional models of democracy in order to increase the transparency, accountability, effectiveness and legitimacy of democratic systems, and to avoid institutional paralysis and political instability.

Liquid democracy and challenges to political parties

Used increasingly by new types of political parties, can liquid democracy be applied more broadly in the process of governance and what would be the implications for constitutional "checks and balances"?

Presenters

Ms Aleida ALAVEZ RUIZ, Vice-President of the Mexican Congress, Mexico
Mr Jens SEIPENBUSCH, Pirate Party, Germany

Discussants

Mr Antonio COSTA, Mayor of Lisbon, Portugal
Mr Yannick HARREL, ISEG, France
Mr Ögmundur JÓNASSON, Member of Parliament, Chairman of the Constitutional Committee, Iceland
Mr Nikolaos MAVRIDIS, Greece, Political Council member of the Dimiurgia Ksana party and Asst. Professor of Research at NYU-Poly and Researcher at NCSR Demokritos

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Andreas GROSS, National Councilor, Switzerland, President of the Council for Democratic Elections and Chair of the Socialist Group to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Moderator

Mr Michael REMMERT, Deputy to the Director of Policy Planning at the Council of Europe

While liquid democracy does pose a variety of challenges to political parties, such as the still unresolved question of anonymity online, or the lengthening of decision making processes, it can be a valuable tool which complements and facilitates the work of political parties. Intra-party liquid democracy can confer additional legitimacy to representative democracy by giving political party members more responsibility in devising policies and a greater say in decision making processes. Furthermore, if used correctly, liquid democracy enables politicians to draw on society's expertise, collectively and individually, thereby strengthening idea generation capacities as well as enhancing problem solving processes.

Tools of liquid democracy could also reduce the feeling of alienation from politics, which many European citizens share, by improving the flow of communication as well as the substance of debate between citizens and their representatives. Representatives would have the opportunity to inform citizens better on what actions they are taking and why, and to put these actions into a broader context.

If citizens are given the possibility to contribute their thoughts and ideas online, people who previously have felt to be merely objects of policy making could in fact become subjects of these processes. This new level of citizen participation is not only a pragmatic way of including citizens in political practices, but can also be seen as a concretisation of an individual's right to direct political participation. In this vein, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has encouraged the Committee of Ministers to consider including direct participation as a fundamental right in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Political parties will not cease to exist because of liquid democracy; rather they will have to reinvent themselves. They will have to learn how to reconcile traditional forms of democracy with more modern, participatory forms. They need to become more flexible, less hierarchical and more open to input on policy proposals from members and from society at large. Liquid

democracy should be experimented with in order to learn more about its potential and limitations. If traditional forms of democracy and participatory democracy are seen as complementary, then liquid democracy can help political parties remind people of the merit of a democratic system over other forms of governance and thereby reinforce the notion of democracy as “politics done by the people for the people”.

Last but not least, it is important to recall that democracy is a work in progress, that democracy as a system of governance will and has to continuously evolve and improve to keep up with a world that is changing faster than ever before, and that tools of liquid democracy simply form part of this evolution.

What is liquid democracy?

Liquid democracy has been hailed as the next step in making representative democracy more participatory. It is described as a mix between direct and indirect forms of democracy which allows its users to decide for themselves whether to vote directly on certain issues or to delegate their vote to a proxy whom they consider as an expert of the issue in question. Proxies can themselves nominate proxies, so that a chain of delegations may be established: for example, members of a trade union may delegate their votes to a union representative. Liquid democracy also encompasses mechanisms for participatory policy development. For example everyone can propose draft bills online which in turn can be amended by other users and may finally be voted on by way of online referendums.

The successful implementation of liquid democracy and the level of challenges this poses to the political system depends to a considerable extent on a country's specific precondition.

Liquid democracy would, for the time being, be difficult to implement in Mexico and countries similar to that of her own, citing as obstacles the lack of access to the internet, widespread poverty, illiteracy and political apathy. Online tools for public participation, such as liquid democracy could only be introduced with the help of experts, legally recognised as such by Parliament, who would participate in online discussions on different policy proposals, to guarantee an informed debate.

When looking at countries where political parties are already using liquid democracy tools, such as the Pirate Party in Germany, several advantages of this new concept emerge.

The Pirate Party do not aspire to become full-time politicians, meaning that liquid democracy enables them to be politically active without the full professional commitment. Secondly, liquid democracy allows for a better overall view and enhanced transparency of deliberation and decision making processes, as online debates are easily accessible and thus do not happen behind closed doors. There is a risk of online voting procedures being hacked: Since all voting procedures are public, one can always download the database and recount the votes cast, and even check who voted how for any given initiative.

Some people argue that online referendums would be inappropriate for complex decision-making processes, such as humanitarian intervention or troop deployments. However, it is not so much about whether an online referendum would be appropriate in a particular situation, but rather whether or not a referendum as such would be the proper political decision making process. More generally, the concept of liquid democracy needs to be framed by a common understanding of democracy in general, for example about which subjects should be decided by public referendums and which areas should be reserved to representative institutions and processes.

Regarding the challenges liquid democracy poses to political parties, although new technologies have changed the way politics are conducted, they do not change the core concepts of democracy; they simply improve the mechanisms in place, thereby making

democracy more tangible and citizen participation in policy making more practicable. In Lisbon, although each year more people participate in this process, the number of people participating in elections and in traditional participation channels remains considerably higher to date. Political parties will continue to exist and remain important to organise and mobilise people and to give them the opportunity to interact face-to-face. They will, however, have to adapt their internal structures to become more flexible and inclusive.

Some participants were critical of the concept of liquid democracy and pointed to some far reaching challenges to political parties. First of all, how can liquid democracy improve transparency if users can sign in and participate in deliberative and decisional processes anonymously? Would parties risk to be held responsible for statements made in their online forums of which they are not the authors? Secondly, we need to highlight the risk of a quick and easy dismissal of politicians by citizens, which would make politicians strongly dependent on citizens' benevolence and thereby unable to take unpopular but necessary decisions, if their mandate could be withdrawn at any moment.

Should liquid democracy be regarded as a pragmatic tool to improve democracy or as an individual right of every citizen to be included as much as possible in policy and decision making processes? If liquid democracy is used in policy making, then political parties would not become redundant, but would need to become more open and flexible, since important decisions would be taken more often in public referendums. They would need to learn to adopt elements of direct democracy. The increased use of referendums, however, should be closely monitored, since they have the power to divide societies, whereas consultations and deliberative participation can improve social cohesion. Therefore liquid democracy should always try to establish a balance between deliberative processes and the perceived need to hold referendums on certain issues.

An illustration of the advantages of liquid democracy for political parties is the founding story of the Dimiurgia Ksana party in Greece, where online consultations were held before the party's first congress even took place. This was followed by a series of workshops where participants collaborated on different issues, and thus got to know each other personally, and finally the results were presented online. The concept of party members coming together first electronically and then physically proved successful; the importance of always complementing interaction and communication online with physical, real-world interaction cannot be underestimated. In this way e-enabled democracy could strengthen political parties rather than weaken them. There is a strong need for more practical experimentation worldwide with liquid democracy tools rather than just talking about their theoretical advantages and drawbacks. Only by testing liquid democracy in the real world will we be able to discern what is feasible to achieve and what is not.

Online petitions and campaigning

How legitimate and effective on-line petition tools are in achieving real results without being connected to institutions and existing constitutional frameworks? Do they trigger genuine engagement or do they lead to a devaluation of participation? How transparent are their business models?

Presenter

Ms Paula HANNEMANN, Germany, Campaigns Director for Change.org in Germany

Ms Preethi HERMAN, India, Country Lead and Campaigns Director for Change.org in India

Mr Ilya MASSUKH, Russian Federation, Russian Public Initiative

Discussants

Mr Dmitry DEDOV, Judge at the European Court for Human Rights, Russian Federation

Mr Ayman ITANI, Digital Media Strategist, Lebanon

Mr Mark JOHNSON, Journalist, the Economist, United Kingdom

Ms Tracey SIMPSON-LAING, United Kingdom, Councillor, City of York, Member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Rapporteur to the Plenary Session

Ms Alina GORGHIU, Member of Parliament, Romania, Member of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Moderator

Mr Ulrich BUNJES, Special Policy Advisor, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe

Online petitioning is an emerging issue that could have far reaching impacts on policy-making processes, reorganisation of the power relationships and the citizens' empowerment to create a change. Social media have had an undeniable impact upon modern democracy. While social platforms have enabled citizens to influence government or local decision-making, the movement has also given rise to charges of slacktivism¹, an easy, feel-good civic engagement without real commitment. The e-petition movement is at the centre of this polemic, allowing citizens to create petitions around issues of their choosing and solicit peer support.

Discussion was articulated around two Initiatives: Change.org (transnational) and Russian Public Initiative (Russian Federation). Both initiatives - although different in terms of political and institutional context in which they are implemented - demonstrated how individuals and community groups can get involved in policy-making by creating petitions.

Change.org is a private online petition platform facilitating the mobilisation of citizen in favour of political initiatives and organising advocacy campaigns, connecting people to decision makers. There are more than 50 million Change.org users in 196 countries, and campaigns are carried out in many languages. There are on average 9,6 successful petitions per day.

Russian public initiative is a government petitions project launched in 2013. Its goal is to ensure participation for Russians in legislative or normative initiatives. Petitions that are signed by 100 000 citizens over 18 years old must be reviewed by the Government. Ten successful petitions are expected until the end of 2013.

There are many similarities and also some differences between these 2 platforms, but both contribute to increasing the level of public participation into the political life.

The procedure for participation in both the Russian Public Initiative and Change.org is transparent. Both do not allow petitions with hateful or discriminatory content and take members' privacy seriously, and will never share their information without their permission.

¹ *Slacktivism* (sometimes slactivism or slackervism) is a portmanteau of the words *slacker* and *activism*. The word is usually considered a pejorative term that describes "feel-good" measures, in support of an issue or social cause, that have little or no practical effect other than to make the person doing it take satisfaction from the feeling they have contributed.

Regarding authentication and democratic participation, within the Russian public initiative only Russian citizens can sign a petition or to initiate one (proof of identity required). In Change.org anyone you can create one or more accounts by just using an/several e-mail address(es) and sign any petition globally.

The initiative presenters argued that in both cases petitions allow achieving good results by the simple fact of raising issues of public concern is easy and straight forward way and by making the institutions themselves more open, transparent, accountable, effective, and responsive through the involvement of the public.

However, the question remains whether on-line petitions can help bridging the divide between those already engaged politically, and those that are not. Some argued that it remains to be proven that e-petitions can increase political participation of underrepresented groups in the petition process. The case of Change.org demonstrated the increasing importance of transnational and international campaigning in bridging this gap. It was stressed that Change.org campaigning draws attention to issues where external influence is sometimes necessary to ease the communication between internal groups and their own government – which has the potential to reorganise power relationships in a greatly beneficial way (Change.org hosts about 40,000 campaigns a month from 196 countries). After Change.org campaigns for example, a simple Indian girl succeeded to influence the Indian government in its decision to regulate the sale of acid, easily available in pharmaceutical market, to protect women from acid attacks; a couple in Russia prevented to convert a child hospital into the VIP hospital; a man from Marseille, contributed to maintain the label trademark of the original “Marseille soap” in competitive market environment. It appears that putting an emphasis on better storytelling of ordinary peoples’ lives can produce particularly good results. It also appears that online campaigns work best when they have narratives behind them – “individual stories of average people crowd-sourcing their way to power”.

In the context of the Russian government-sponsored Public Initiative, the emphasis is put on the need of amplifying the public participation in policy-making, as part of the governmental process. The criteria of efficient petitioning include the idea of “improving” a situation or a process by proposing one or several solutions for its efficient implementation. Participants pointed out however to the risk for the process to be manipulated by the public endeavour to monitor the voting process of the registered petitions.

The argument above is obviously related to the question of the public confidence in government-supported initiatives in the Russian political context. On another hand, the criticism is of more general character because under certain conditions signatures and other private information, including email addresses, can be found by search engines. Several participants pointed out that on-line petition may be abused if signers do not use real names, thus undermining its legitimacy. Verification, for example via a confirmation e-mail can prevent padding a petition with false names and e-mails. The presenters of Change.org specified that online petition tools allow people to collect signatures online, but require sometimes delivering of the signatures to a decision maker offline. Many petition creators download their list of signers and petition comments for in-person deliveries as well.

A defining element of petitions is the extent to which they are linked to actual decision-making processes. Despite the fact that the e-petitions very often do not represent the majority, they enable citizens and community groups to raise concerns with public authorities and give some sense of the support for the proposition amongst the wider population. They have a real potential to act as a significant input to representative forms of democracy by providing a mechanism to enable the public to express their views to policy-makers. While there may be challenges associated with this, petitions systems may help underpin the legitimacy and functioning of representative institutions. The way forward in increasing the effectiveness of e-petitions system is to require a formal response from the public authority.

Where it is clear that the authority has given due weight to the proposition, the potential for empowerment increases: the device exhibits the potential for impact on decisions, thus providing a rationale for increased political efficacy and activity amongst civic organisations.

E-petitions may be seen as a valid way of gauging public preferences and getting issues on the political agenda that would otherwise not make it through traditional politics. E-petitions may be a particularly valid argument in countries where politics is organised around models of strict territorial representation. In this sense, e-petitions may facilitate the emergence of “trans-regional or trans-national constituencies”, transcending the boundaries of electoral districts. Indeed, it can be one of the main potentials for e-petitions and one of the missing links in the world of Internet and politics in general.

Fostering public debate and building a shared vision of the future

Is it possible to harness the power of internet and social media to encourage young people to share their hopes and vision for the future? And how to make sure that these ideas are really heard by policy-makers?

Presenters

Mr Pascal DERVILLE, Questionnez Vos Elus, FACEP, France

Mr Julius MAATEN, Head of Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Philippines

Ms Minerva SALAO, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Philippines

Discussants

Mr Rob Girling, USA, Co-founder of Artefact

Mr. Moussa LARABA, Former Member of the Constitutional Council, Algeria

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Igor KOLMAN, Member of Parliament, Croatia, Third Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Moderator

Ms Verena TAYLOR, Director of the Directorate General of Programmes, Council of Europe

Many online (and offline) initiatives across the world strive to build trust between politics and the public, to engage people in the political process, to motivate them and to bring citizens and elected officials closer together. The examples presented at the Forum were the “It’s all about freedom” campaign led by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in The Philippines, based on the idea of talking about freedom and translating it into everyday language and everyday life, so that people may improve their own environment. The initiative targets Filipino youth, activists, NGOs and aims at generating participation through fun and entertainment, by fostering debate on different issues related to the concept of freedom (e.g. freedom of information, climate change, and reproductive health). The initiative is largely based both on real and virtual participation through internet, social media and blogs.

Questionnez vos élus (Question your representatives) is an internet based platform in France based on a German example that includes around 1 300 elected officials at national, regional and local levels. People can get information about them, their activities, voting and other track-records and, most importantly ask them questions directly. The aim is to mobilize people and encourage citizens and elected representatives to communicate, with a view to creating a more transparent and accountable democracy.

Lab discussions concluded that in order to engage more people in dialogue and politics it has to be made fun, accessible and user friendly. Adding a fun aspect to politics by using game plays and comics to get people involved can be beneficial. But how to ensure that there will be an impact at the level of policy makers? The ideas and platforms need to be clear, clean and simple. The process also needs to be a rewarding experience for those participating. People, especially youth, consider politics as something very distant that can't be influenced, can't be trusted that doesn't include or respect the people. In order to engage young people, it is necessary to offer a connection through ICT, but also to engage them concretely in their community in order to engage them in a shared future, and give them the tools to find common solutions to their problems. A system of "awards" could also be experimented - an idea was proposed to make use of online communities and reward youth participation online.

Digital human rights defenders

Technology empowers people to defend freedom and human rights, but it could also be used to mobilise crowds for violence and destruction of freedom. What safeguards and control mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that those who control technology are subject to transparency and democratic control themselves?

Presenters

Chris DOTEN, USA, Senior Program Manager for NDI's Information and Communication Technology Programs

Mr Jan Robert HARDH, Executive Director of Civil Rights Defenders, Sweden

Mr Karl Stefan Mathias WIKSTRÖM, CEO of RBK Communication in Stockholm, Sweden

Discussants

Mr Mikhail FEDOTOV, Advisor to the President of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the Council of the President of the Russian Federation for Civil Society and Human Rights

Mr Paul LEMMENS, Belgium, Judge at the European Court of Human Rights

Ms Henryka MOŚCICKA-DENDYS, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland

Mr Nils MUIŽNIEKS, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Urszula GACEK, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the Council of Europe

Moderator

Ms Gordana BERJAN, Head of Unit, Children's Rights Policies Co-ordination, "Building a Europe for and with children", Council of Europe

Natalia and the TAILS projects provide practical solutions to security problems and privacy for human rights defenders. It is interesting that these problems have been identified not only in this Forum, but recently in the conclusions of the Warsaw dialogue on democracy. It was found that amongst others for democracy to thrive and for human rights defenders to feel safe, we should, firstly, encourage direct civic participation through the internet and new media, secondly, support the development of new communication technologies and, thirdly, support and protect internet activists through safe communication systems.

The Natalia project is a system of alarm bracelets for human rights defenders which alert followers on social media, but also, and possibly more importantly, alert physical persons acting as shields for the human rights defender in their geographical vicinity should that

defender be attacked or kidnapped. The Natalia project reduces the sense of isolation the human rights defenders have and it gives them a feeling of security. Judged by the number of watchers who can follow on the social network, the project is very transferable. It has no borders, the network can be increased and hopefully after this Forum, we will see it going viral on the internet. As to impact, because of the cost of the project, there are currently 50 human rights defenders wearing these bracelets their aim is to reach 500. However, the impact is not just about numbers, but also about the level of security and protection we can give. In fact, the alarm has never gone off. It appears that the very fact that someone is wearing this bracelet has already made repressive regimes think twice about taking these people into custody, torturing them or worse. It was suggested that the impact could be increased even more if they link directly with the Council of Europe's PACE rapporteur, the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner or OSCE agents.

The technological shield can only go this far. In order to effectively protect human rights defenders, we also need investigations, prosecutions, and penalties, legislation and policies, speeches of politicians stigmatizing them and making it OK to attack them needs to be stopped too. There is a need for legal training with strong technological component for national judges. Organisations such as the European Endowment for Democracy: offering timely support to human rights defenders and activists in countries in transition.

On sustainability, at a cost of 6000 Euro per bracelet, it is quite an expensive project. However, this also goes hand in hand with training already provided by NGOs to human rights defenders to increase their security. Finally on risk, it is a highly secure, tailor-made system; you can't do this with a mobile phone. There were questions raised about the security of the actual physical shield, but here one way is to use foreign diplomats who have immunity.

The TAILS project provides open source software to allow for secure and anonymous communication over the net. Being an open source, free system TAILS is easily transferable. As to impact, already 200.000 copies were downloaded, and probably more sent from person to person. Wherever and whenever a human rights activist needs to communicate safely and securely, they can use TAILS. As to sustainability, it is developed by volunteers often working without costs and supported by the National Democratic Institute, so we have no limits here and as to risk, we did encounter the possibility of this anonymity being used by criminal sources, but also being used for disinformation. So that was one of the risks.

In summary, both projects tick the boxes on transferability, sustainability and impact, the risk factor being far outweighed by the positives in those three categories.

The applications such as Natalia and TAILS raise the more general question of data protection and anonymity on the internet. While anonymity might be useful in protecting freedom fighters, it also serves criminal activities and hate speech. In terms of democratic participation, anonymity is not conducive to building trust or fair political debate. Anonymity applies not only to opinions and actions, but also to sources of funding of different applications and initiatives, if there is no transparency, democracy is threatened. However, these are risks to take, the price to pay in order to realise the benefits of anonymity – if governments are given the power to remove anonymity, this would undermine citizens' freedoms.

The quest for transparency

Can we find a balance between the quest for the transparency of democratic institutions and the respect of the rule of law, as well as the rights and safety of individuals which may be exposed by whistle-blower platforms?

Presenters

Mr Adam SENFT, Canada, Research Officer, The Citizen Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs

Mr Atanas TCHOBANOV, Journalist, Bulgaria

Mr Assen YORDANOV, Journalist, Bulgaria

Discussants

Ms Chantal CUTAJAR, France, President, Observatoire citoyen pour la transparence financière internationale

Mr Jung-Won KIM, Senior Research Judge, Constitutional Court, South Korea

Ms Rachel OLDROYD, United Kingdom, Deputy Editor of the Bureau of Investigative Journalism

Mr Charles ONYANO-OBBO, Uganda, Executive Editor, Africa and Digital Media Division at Nation Media Group

Mr John SHIPTON, Australia, Chief Executive Officer of the WikiLeaks-Party

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Ellen BERENDS, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe

Moderator

Ms Julia LAFFRANQUE, Estonia, Judge at the European Court of Human Rights

One of the key questions emerging from the democracy & technology debate is how to balance the quest for a greater transparency of democratic institutions with respect for the rule of law, so that the rights and safety of individuals may not be exposed by whistle-blower platforms.

The OpenNet Initiative researches targeted censorship and surveillance (as opposite to passive/mass surveillance) with the following objectives: to increase transparency, to provide credible and non-partisan information, and to build capacity. It applies a multidisciplinary approach and shares its information in various ways, including publications and the creation of research networks.

Research by the OpenNet Initiative has shown that censorship has grown notably over the past ten years and is currently used in a large number of countries for reasons of national security, child exploitation, public morality, economic interests, hate speech and to restrict/silence dissent speech. Methods have evolved and become more sophisticated, such as just-in-time filtering (application of controls when information matters most: elections, protests, sensitive anniversaries, scandals). The private sector increasingly plays a facilitating role in censorship and surveillance.

Balkanleaks (Bulgaria) consider that press freedom in Bulgaria has diminished considerably since the country became a member of the European Union. Balkanleaks seeks to expose misconduct and criminal behaviour of officials and public figures, to provide critical information to support investigative journalism and to protect the public interest in Bulgaria. Balkanleaks offers whistle-blowers the opportunity to submit electronic information anonymously. Storage of information is distributed. Journalists verify the information before

making it public. The organisation has uncovered many leaks, such as several cases of corruption by high officials including a Prime Minister, a secret report on nuclear power plant construction, etc.

In reaction to the above initiatives, some concerns were expressed such as the fact that the search for transparency is not a goal in itself. Transparency should be aimed at what is necessary and fair to preserve democracy, such as contributing to the fight against organised crime. The substantial value of information depends on its understanding, the timing and the context of its disclosure.

Whistleblowers tend to focus on specific issues without sufficient attention to the big picture and sometimes at the cost of innocent bystanders. It is essential that their information is handled by experts and with great care. Efforts are made to protect whistleblowers by ensuring anonymity with technological means, but isn't anonymity a problem in itself? Who will notice if the whistleblower is attacked or worse?

Whistleblowers and those who are handling the information of whistleblowers are insufficiently protected by law. Currently, laws mostly protect the interests of the state instead of those of whistleblowers and their helpers.

Whereas transparency is a great tool for governments, certain information needs to remain concealed (such as in matters of national security). We need balance. Citizens are insufficiently aware of censorship and surveillance activities, and of their own legal rights. Who is going to survey the governments?

The main recommendations concerned improved legal protection of whistle-blowers and those who are handling their information; increased clarity regarding which information cannot be disclosed without legal consequences; and raising of citizens' awareness about their rights and responsibilities, and ways to protect themselves.

Theme 2: Towards Democracy 2.0?

Open Government initiatives, often referred to as e-government, e-parliament or democracy 2.0, aim to re-establish the link between citizens and officials by increasing transparency and collaboration. They create spaces for citizens to share their vision for society and debate policy choices or to oversee the integrity of democratic institutions and the quality of public services. Do such initiatives really help to restore citizens' confidence in their representatives and improve institutional performance and are they able to revitalise representative democracy?

Crowdsourcing in politics and law-making

Do crowdsourcing platforms – such as the Finnish "Open Ministry" platform – contribute to a more effective and relevant legislation or do they make the process slower and more complex? A further question is whether policy making is improved or distorted by public opinion polls conducted through complex analysis of large collections of online data.

Presenters

Ms Tanja AITAMURTO, Finland, Visiting Researcher at the Program on Liberation Technology at Stanford University

Mr Paul GUYOT, President Semiocast, France
Mr Mikael JUNGNER, Member of Parliament, Finland
Mr Joonas PEKKANEN, Founder of Open Ministry, Finland

Discussants

Ms Nunzia CATALFO, Member of Parliament, Italy, Member of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Mr Ben O'LOUGHLIN, Department of Politics and International Relations, Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom
Ms Francesca TRALDI, Head of Digital Agenda at Magna Carta Foundation, Italy

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Anne BRASSEUR, Member of Parliament, Luxembourg, Chair of the ALDE Group to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Moderator

Mr Charles KENNEDY, United Kingdom, Member of Parliament and Member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Crowdsourcing is processing data and ideas from a large number of people to contribute to solving a problem. It means that the decision-makers will achieve a better understanding of the different dimensions of a problem, so as to provide an appropriate response. In the law-making process and in politics, it is based on confidence in the collective wisdom. Semantic polling is a technique of analysing large amounts of data collected on the internet through the use of keywords within tweets and in texts that are found on the social media. These are analysed and codified in order to be able to draw conclusions on what the public opinion considers important on very specific subjects.

Crowdsourcing entails active participation by citizens. Semantic polling is about passive participation and in fact the citizen does not even know that his/her words is being scanned.

An example of crowdsourcing is The Open Ministry platform, created after the adoption in spring 2012 in Finland of the new law on the citizens' initiative. A petition is officially recognised when the signatures of at least 50,000 voters are collected, including online, within 6 months. Two types of initiatives are possible: request to the government to consider a change in legislation and direct submission to parliament of draft legislation. Managed by an independent, non-profit organisation, the Open Ministry platform enables the drawing-up of proposals or drafts law, as well as their signature online. The value of the platform is as much in enabling the actual proposals to be drafted, as in providing a space for deliberation and consensus-seeking which is experienced in a positive way by participants even if the proposal is not successful. This tool makes it easier for the public to understand complex issues. It also offers the possibility to develop campaigns to seek the necessary financial resources (crowd-funding). Since the creation of the platform, 500 ideas have been proposed and 50 projects have been created, five of which have been signed by more than 50,000 voters. Experience in Finland, Italy and elsewhere shows that crowdsourcing encourages the participation of youth and women.

The advantages of the crowdsourcing law are greater awareness and a higher public profile, more active participation, much more awareness among the young, sharing of ideas, having access to external expertise without having to pay for it, creating space for learning, seeking consensus and basing decisions on a very broad support. The disadvantages are: the participants are not representative, there is a lack of legitimacy, there is the fear that some politicians and civil servants might have to relinquish some of their power, there is the risk of

diffusion of responsibility and the risk of overcrowding. There is the need to manage a huge volume of information and evaluate people's contributions. There is also the need to persuade civil servants and politicians of the necessity to create a culture of participation by using crowdsourcing as a lever meaning that we assume a certain social capital.

The semantic polling technique analyses large datasets collected through the Internet/social networks, to study public opinion on specific issues (SemioCast is one of the companies providing this service). Many people exchange "political" messages on the web: 1.2% of tweets are about politics in France. Citizens do not necessarily follow the themes that are on the agenda of the media and everyday life provides opportunities to take up political issues in conversations. Semantic polling identifies who discusses a given topic, what are the emerging issues, and cluster individuals according to their opinion. It can be used, for example, to measure the popularity of politicians to judge media performance during the televised debates between candidates, to assess the reactions of citizens and media as well as refining the arguments in order to be more persuasive to voters. Nevertheless, insofar as each user can be identified and profiled, a range of ethical questions and legal issues arise.

The advantages of semantic polling include the following: the system allows understanding the concerns of the population and identifying new trends in thinking. It also broadens the scope of surveys by using a quantitative approach and it gives a snapshot of spontaneous reactions and it allows them to analyse trends over a long period. The disadvantages include its limited representivity, the fact that the user of social media does not know that their words are being read, there is the risk of false tweets to manipulate public opinion, there is the danger the individuals whose words are being surveyed are identified with the violation of privacy that is part of that and that their data is being used for commercial purposes, a lack of transparency on the methodology and then the risk that the politicians will react with short-term solutions. In conclusion: crowdsourcing and scanning are instruments which are there for decision-makers to use but they need to do it in a very responsible way. This requires a change in our participatory culture which has also to do with generational changes.

Open parliament

What is added value and limitations of platforms which make advocacy and lobbying transparent and should they become the norm in democracy?

Presenter

Ms Marci HARRIS, Co-founder and CEO of POPVOX, USA
Mr Cyril LAGE, Parlement et Citoyen, France

Discussants

Ms Christie DUDLEY, USA, Executive Director and Co-founder of Fork the Law
Mr Scott HUBLI, Director of Governance, National Democratic Institute, USA
Mr Jeffrey ROY, Professor in the School of Public Administration, Faculty of Management at Dalhousie University, Canada

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Giulia CIFALDI, Italy, Youth Representative, Project Manager in the field of deliberative and participatory democracy

Moderator

Mr Mark NEVILLE, Head, Migration and Equality Department, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

A key question addressed was what is the added value and limitation of platform which make advocacy and lobbying transparent and should they become the norm of democracy. The question was addressed by means of analysing the impact and challenges of existing platforms. PopVox is civic start-up with the mission of raising a neutral and civic engagement and to allow citizenship to have a free access to information. Organisations and individuals (350 000 registered users) can share their position about bills on the website – and they do. Because real people share real ideas and comments with Congress, and the power is not in the platform but in the voices, and moreover it helps the institutions to be connected with the citizenship. Citizen mobilisation can be massive and make a real difference – such as in the case of the bills on online piracy and on gun control. Perils for the future involve finding funds, for example they don't have any advertisement in order to protect data.

The "Parliament and citizens" initiative in France allows citizens to contribute with analyses and ideas to parliamentarians as they develop the legislations including citizens in the law making process. The issues and proposed solutions are first presented by a member of Parliament. Then citizens and interest groups are invited to present their views on the platform. Everyone can agree, disagree or propose amendments to the proposal. This period lasts for a month, involving between 2,500 and 5,000 contributions.

As a next step, a debate is organised between the parliamentarians and 6 citizens chosen (some by the 'community', others randomly). Once the presentation is done citizens can mobilise in order to support or not support the various propositions. After the debate, the parliamentarians start to draft the bill.

The platform is very recent but already very successful – with 10 000 members, 6 initiatives and one proposition adopted by the Senate. The platform will soon allow citizens to launch propositions too.

The advantage of direct dialogue between citizens and parliaments is that more radical initiatives can be launched, mobilising those who are most disillusioned and critical of the system and refuse to engage through the traditional channels.

One of the challenges is the continuous engagement of citizens. People engage in politics often when they are angry, so the question is how to motivate people to participate actively always and how to increase the participation of the moderate voices. At the same time, simple participation on online platforms, even in great numbers, does not lead to change - mobilisation of citizens does.

And effective mobilisation still needs political parties. It is of crucial importance to re-think political structures and parties. Traditional political channels are very centralised and weak communicators. How can we engage parties to move on to logic of anger to logic of co-construction? Crowdsourcing is still in its infancy but holds many possible answers.

How could the CoE modify his own methods of governance and the way that it interacts with the people?

Another issue is accessibility and how to speak the same language. For example we can see that there is a breakdown in the public debate because people are issue centred and cannot see the things in common so they need to really have more opportunities to work together and to have a process for negotiation.

Another concern is about trust and scepticism, how to motivate people who are disillusioned with politics or worse, distrust them. The social platforms now are transparent but are they trustworthy?

While the initiatives seem easily replicable in other national contexts, the future will prove if this is indeed the case. And the last concern is about the exportation of the initiatives. They also leave a lot of open questions, and how to involve the middle ground and how youth can be involved.

Virtual agora

As people, especially the young, tend to privilege the Internet as a source of information and space for exchange, is it possible to find ways of creating a virtual Agora or town hall to debate matters of public interest?

Presenters

Mr. Robert BJARNASON, Co-Founder of the Citizens Foundation, Iceland

Mr. Gunnar GRIMSSON, Co-Founder of the Citizens Foundation, Iceland

Ms Catherine HOWE, Expert in Digital Media and e-democracy, United Kingdom

Ms Jennifer ROWLANDS, Chief Executive of Lewes District Council, United Kingdom

Mr Anthony ZACHARZEWSKI, Co-founder of The Democratic Society, United Kingdom

Discussants

Ms Hille HINSBERG, Estonia, Expert, Governance and Civil Society Programme, Praxis Center for Policy Studies

Mr Andranik MELIK-TANGYAN, Head of unit 'Policy modelling' at the Institute for Economic and Social Research of the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, Germany

Mr Vincenzo SANTANGELO, Member of Parliament, Italy, Vice-President of the Italian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Monica NICA, Sweden, Youth Representative, Social Sciences Student Union (Lund University) board member & Bringing Europeans Together Association member

Moderator

Mr Andreas KIEFER, Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

As people, especially the young, tend to privilege the Internet as a source of information and space for exchange, is it possible to find ways of creating a virtual Agora or town hall to debate matters of public interest?

The Networked Networks initiative is the collaboration between The Democratic Society, an independent organisation focused on promoting democracy, and the Lewes District Council, a mixed urban-rural district of about 100,000 people, comprising of 41 towns and villages in the UK. The aim of the project is to create sustainable partnership and interaction between local governments and citizens while also ensuring that the citizens themselves are enabled to enter the public discourse and take part in the decision-making process by using new modes of communication, like the Internet. The challenge is to combine service-related goals in a way that creates a relationship which is to be maintained for other purposes. The target

of the initiative is the citizen, who wants to debate and re-design local policies. The project aims at nothing less than the reinvention of democracy. The vision is to create a sort of “cultured institution” lying on the principles of openness and participation, which leads then to the establishment of a New District Council.

The Citizens Foundation runs an open source e-Democracy web application called Your Priorities. The website is free of charge available in many countries as well as in several languages. The most successful example of a Your Priorities website is Better Reykjavik, which won the European e-Democracy Awards in 2011 and numerous Icelandic awards for innovation and participation. An open collaboration between the City Council and Better Reykjavik gives citizens the confidence that the top priorities on the platform are voted upon at council meetings every month. The circle closes either when an initiative is put in practice, or when the city council offers a response on why a certain idea was not implemented.

The construction of the website of ‘Your Priority’ is similar to the one of the previous project. Citizens can make their comments on a particular issue, their positive and negative arguments are shown in two separate columns on the left and right hand side. There is no chance to post arguments for or against a particular opinion which avoids the formation of extremist interest groups and guarantees democracy. No registration is required which ensures anonymity and the protection of personal data. The project is now in its final stage, and the Foundation is looking for sponsors for the implementation.

The main issues raised during the debate concerned privacy, authentication of participants, capture of the democratic e-infrastructure by vested interests, youth participation, equal access and unfair advantage influenced by the digital and wealth divide, representativeness of the debate, and the relationship with conventional democracy. The use of open source as opposed to proprietary software for democracy applications was recommended.

Several conditions for the successful implementation of e-democracy project need to be in place. First of all, the existence of political will - this was guaranteed by engaging the local political leaders in the UK project and by co-operating with the main political party (and afterwards the elected mayor) of Reykjavik in case of the previous project of the Citizens Foundation. The will should extend to the actual reform of local government. In this relation, e-democracy is a good way to test the public opinion and gain the support of citizens therefore it should not only be applied during election periods. The aims of the project have to be clear and correspond to citizens’ concerns, like waste production in the English example. Another important key for success is accessibility – in order for people feel encouraged to participate, it is useful to make the work behind the project visible and understandable for them. The results of the initiative should be communicated to the public. It is an added value if the innovative is transferable to other areas/countries – as the Citizens Foundation’s project was extended to the Balkans.

Something to be careful about is ensuring the representativeness of the debate; ensuring that a proposal is actually supported by the people and that some voices are not overemphasised, is something to which particular attention must be given. Readily available access to the Internet is a pre-condition for e-participation schemes to work, but not a sufficient condition – people need to be motivated by guarantees that their participation will make a difference in policy and practice. The design and the use of e-participation tools are of critical importance. It is important to find the specific solution in each community and not to apply the one-size-fits-all approach. Clear rules of use, privacy and transparency need to be set in order to avoid wrong usage. Financial capacity may prevent local authorities from adopting technological solutions with optimal security guarantees.

An issue to consider is authentication – especially at the local level it is important to ensure that online participants are indeed local residents. The e-participation tools should be promoted in schools, universities, workplaces etc. in order to ensure the widest possible take

up. Nobody will check a website, even if it is perfectly designed, if they don't know about it and/or they don't see the necessity. Therefore, a well-planned PR work is essential when starting an e-democracy project, but the cost can be high. An age divide exists but it may be surprising – in Better Reykjavik for instance older people are much more active than the young.

The e-democracy tools' representativeness has to be measurable in order to legitimise government decision following e-deliberation. In order to maintain active participation, Networked networks maintain an activists' handbook (e.g. for NGOs) to boost vertical conversation.

E-participation projects do not seek to undermine traditional democracy - they engage with people already active and represent a qualitative extension of participation by offering agenda-setting powers to citizens. It is complementary to what conventional democracy has to offer. The political creativity of the people stimulates the political creativity of the officials. Out of all the criteria necessary for success in similar projects, the one that stood out alongside clear aims, transparent and robust rules, and getting and promoting tangible results, is the political willingness to inform, to involve and to respond. Political (institutional) back-up for e-participation initiatives is a key factor for success. It is crucial and probably one of the biggest challenges to convince the civil servants and political leadership to interact more actively with the citizens in order to improve the quality of the work of the local authorities.

Election alert

How effective are on-line tools to report and aggregate data on election malpractice? How can we increase the institutions' capacity to understand, analyse, prevent and mitigate outbreaks of election-related violence and encourage partnerships with security sector agencies, civil society and other state and non-state actors to ensure take-up, sustainability and ownership?

Presenters

Mr Sead ALIHODZIC, Senior Programme Officer at International IDEA, Sweden
 Mr Mark KAMAU KAMOTHO, User Experience Lead at the iHub, Kenya
 Mr Jeff MAINA, iHub Web master, Kenya

Discussants

Mr Christian Baptiste QUENTIN, Judge at the Constitutional Court, Gabon
 Mr Leonid VOLKOV, Blogger and Member of the City Council
 Yekaterinenburg, Russian Federation
 Mr Steven WAGENSEIL, USA, Consultant, Democracy, Human Rights and Elections
 Mr Alex WIRTH, USA, Chair of the Campaign for a Presidential Youth Council

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Mantas PUPINIS, Lithuania, Youth Representative, Researcher at Public Policy and Management Institute

Moderator

Mr Josef HUBER, Head of the Pestalozzi Programme, Council of Europe

E-technologies have been used to design a range of tools for reporting and aggregating data on election malpractice. Two examples were considered. UCHAGUZI, was created by the

user experience laboratory iHub in Kenya. This tool allows the local citizens reporting on governance and electoral malpractices and thus to keep the governing and election process honest. It functions as both a mobile application and an SMS service. This way it can be used by as many people as possible. The proactive measures taken by Uchaguzi allow citizens to be engaged before, during and after elections. Verification of data is addressed by the use of trained observers in elections stations and required confirmations to ensure the information is valid.

The Electoral Risk Management (ERM) tool was created by International IDEA. ERM is a software which is designed to enhance users' capacities to understand election-related risks, analyse them and take action to prevent or mitigate election-related violence. It goes further than other similar tools in the field, as it involves three interconnected modules: learning module, which allows acquiring knowledge about the various ways in which the election related violence is conducted; analysis module, which allows analysing election data related to specific cases (as well as drawing maps, which mark the risky places); and acting module, where various ways of action to mitigate election-related violence are laid out.

The main added value of such tools is that they enable a more direct participation in democracy (especially the UCHAGUZI tool). People can participate both in reporting on the election malpractice, but also in the development of the tool itself. Tools such as UCHAGUZI also improve the speed of electoral reporting. In principle, it could be done very well by the usual election observers. However, mass reporting is much more effective - it covers more ground and more cases.

This creates trust in the system. People are more likely to come to elections and to later trust their elected officials when they believe that they are controlling the election process.

The main advantage of the ERM tool, created by International IDEA, is that it connects learning and action. This software provides an opportunity to improve knowledge about the election-related violence as well as a list of actions that can be taken.

Overall, the tools help to keep the governments accountable. The main challenge here is to make governments care about the reports and to make sure that the reports are not prohibited in any way.

The e-tools for preventing and combatting election malpractice illustrate the changing the role of the "expert" in the electoral field, either by actively seeking "anti-expert" input or by enlarging our definition of experts to include everyone in the field. In order to shift away from top-down models and prescriptive measures, a human-centred approach would promote more trust and involvement in the democratic process.

This reflects one of the fundamentals of democracy, the importance of individuals over institutions. Individuals armed with technology are making a real difference in the democratic process. Their proactive use of technology to upload data, report and react has contributed to fairer elections all over the globe. Their input in turn shapes how civil service organisations react, perpetuating the influence of bottom-up efforts. The role of technology as the "magic" solution is also put into question: technology needs people to think and to act and there are situations where technology is not always the best or most appropriate solution.

However, the value of technology is limited in the absence of will or spirit for change. Governments need to investigate claims of disenfranchisement and be involved in claims; they may need to find intermediaries in the international community.

Other issues of importance are the cost and verification of data of generated by technology tools. Tools may be free for users and, as in the case of the iHUB tools, be open-source.

This helps cuts cost overall by responding to threats quickly and adapting to changing circumstances.

E-election alert tools are useful and provide optimism for the future of elections, but are not complete answers to the many challenges to the democratic process. While pinpointing problem areas is essential for a fast response, it also tends to highlight the worst parts of the system and draw attention away from all the success stories of elections. The most important role of these tools is their ability to re-create confidence and trust in the electoral process by creating more transparency and by offering an opportunity to take action to ordinary people, thereby increasing turnout and participation. The challenge remains how to adapt the tools to ever-changing contexts and users, and determining where and when technology tools are useful for finding solutions.

Recommendations for improvement include allocating more resources to prevention and using all available tools before elections. The monitoring of elections should be standardised by adapting these tools to different countries and contexts. A more human-centred and anti-expert attitude is essential to make elections meaningful for all participants.

Cyber deliberation

Will intelligent software and platforms which are able to extract a dominant narrative from unstructured conversations remain prototypes or will they be mainstreamed by democratic institutions to include citizens in deliberation and decision-making?

Presenters

Ms Vanessa LISTON, Co- founder of CiviQ, Ireland

Mr. Mark O'TOOLE, Co- founder of CiviQ, Ireland

Discussants

Mr Khalil AL-HAMAR, Founder & CEO of Edges Media Company, Kuwait

Mr Tim HUGHES, Researcher at Involve, United Kingdom

Mr Giacomo MAZZONE, Italy, Head of Institutional Relations and Members Relations (South), European Broadcasting Union

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Artur MOCHALOV, Russia, Youth Representative, Associate Professor of Constitutional Law, Activist

Moderator

Mr André-Jacques DODIN, Head of Division of Intergovernmental Co-operation and Youth Policy, Youth Department, Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Council of Europe

The digital age offers a great opportunity for connecting citizens and democratic institutions by means of online deliberations. Today, citizens express thousands of opinions via the Internet through online petitions, discussion forums and social media. But is any government able to manage large quantities of natural opinions? Are all different opinions really heard? How can it hear all participants' voices including minorities' ones? Is it possible to feel for areas consensus as well as most difference on any issue?

Opinions should not only be captured by opinion polls, not only because they can be methodologically questionable but also because they do not reflect the nuances in individual's ideas. When there is a real intention to capture the range of existing opinions, there is a problem in the amount of information available. E-technology can help manage this information in a way that is helpful to the democratic process.

This possibility is illustrated by the Cyber deliberation initiative by 'CiviQ, a start-up that developed from the idea that there was a lack on the local democracy in particular areas. The initiative is an internet-based tool for a better quality of interaction between government and citizens. Its fundamental innovation is a new type of natural opinion flows capture. The approach is based on the Q-methodology which enables citizens to find the full range of perspectives on any issue including minority positions. Individual opinions are visualised in relation to the alternative perspectives, and perspectives are shown in how they relate to each other. Through online or offline deliberation people can see and understand the progress of deliberation/negotiation and find an area of consensus. However, we should remember that consensus is exclusionary; there is probably a minority voice that has been excluded.

In the process of deliberation via the Q-methodology, citizens can interact simultaneously with other people present in a room, for example using a tablet during a conference to consult different opinions. Users are actively engaged in creating new knowledge from natural opinion streams by ranking a diverse set of other citizens' opinions on an issue.

Internet is not just about algorithms and mere science, but a place for people to talk, a tool to communicate. For CiviQ, natural opinions are not just on the internet but in offline meetings. CiviQ can be offline as well, the focus is on people, on evaluating statements coming from a general flow. All data in CiviQ is anonymous. It is a method to enable the understanding of a complex issue based on a wide variety of information sources (Facebook, newspapers, offline meeting, underrepresented groups), emails and SMSs and a wide range of opinions..

The methods and tools within the Q-methodology can be chosen in different ways (including offline tools) that let use the approach in any context and in every country. The methodology has already raised interest in local governments in Ireland where the project has very recently started. Nevertheless, the use of the tool implies that users have a rather good level of literacy – including e-literacy, cognitive and analytical skills and understanding of societal issues.

The effectiveness of e-deliberation systems depends on who control the systems. In weak democracies initiatives that criticise those in power would not be allowed in the e-platform. And event in established democracies, the link between outcome of the platform and the use governments will make of it is not self-evident.

The innovation is a new type of knowledge that comes from natural public opinion flows. The availability of this knowledge being produced in society can make it difficult for governments to ignore. Public opinion and difference are the foundation of democracies.

Theme 3: Governing with Citizens

Direct democracy can be, under certain conditions, a way of dealing with the citizen's disengagement from representative politics. A range of other ways of involving citizens in governance has emerged, fuelled by web and social media applications: participatory budgeting and crowdfunding for government projects, for example, give community members a voice in the fiscal decision-making processes and invite them to deliberate on the local authorities' financial decisions. Are these phenomena confined to a few pioneering cities or are they heralding a shift towards participatory democracy?

Direct democracy – the Swiss experience

Today Direct Democracy is part of the Swiss identity and contributes to the integration and the well-being of the very heterogeneous Swiss society. It might be a source of inspiration to others how to overcome the crises of democracy although there are shortcomings in its implementation.

Presenters

Mr Andreas GROSS, National Councilor, Switzerland, President of the Council for Democratic Elections and Chair of the Socialist Group to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr Uwe SERDÜLT, Switzerland, Vice-Director of the Centre for Research on Direct Democracy

Discussants

Mr Gagik HARUTYUNYAN, President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Armenia and member of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe

Mr Bruno KAUFMANN, Member of a local government, President of the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, Sweden
SAI, Founder of Make Your Laws, USA

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Nvard LORYAN, Armenia, Youth Representative, Assistant to "Armenia Against Corruption" Project Manager

Moderator

Mr Alexandre GUESSEL, Director of Political Advice, Council of Europe

The common basis, both for the presentations of four direct democracy models/initiatives and the ensuing discussions was the perception, generally shared by the participants, of a dwindling trust of the European citizens in the concept of representative democracy, seemingly reflected in shrinking voters' turnouts. In many 'old' democracies citizens felt – in particular since the 2008 financial crisis - that they had to "obey the power of the economy". In many "post-communist" democracies citizens were also disappointed with the institutions of representative Democracy and the Rule of Law.

Especially for the young people – of whom many in Southern Europe protested 2010 - 2012 against the impact of austerity policies on their lives – direct democracy seems to be "the magic wand" that could repair the perceived deficiencies of representative democracy, or – in the minds of quite a few people - even replace it – in the form of internet-based Liquid Democracy.

Switzerland, the 'motherland of referenda', is of course the most prominent example for the long standing implementation of a direct democracy concept. Since 1891, app. 500 popular initiatives and referenda had been started on national or cantonal level. The success, but also the past and present shortcomings of the Swiss model of direct democracy could be – and indeed have been - a source of information, inspiration and encouragement for other countries.

Citizens have through direct democracy and referenda a choice which motivates them to participate more in the democratic decision making process. It is not only a way of balancing the political influence between the powerful and the less powerful. The Swiss form of direct democracy enhances also inclusiveness and participation – an aspect not to be underestimated for a country with a considerable naturalized immigrant population - and

improves the quality of representative democracy, as direct and representative democracy are mutually complementary concepts. The strong direct democratic element in the Swiss constitutional system ensures that voters could influence the power structures even in the period between the general elections and could correct possible errors of representative Democracy.

Direct democracy would need some conditions that would allow it to function credibly. It was particularly important not to lay too many obstacles into the way of calling referenda. The threshold should be relatively low and citizens should have enough time to form an opinion about the issues at stake. Direct democracy would of course also depend on an infrastructure of strong institutions and the Rule of Law.

There are however some caveats. In Switzerland there is no public financing of parties meaning that the success of referenda depends largely on the capacity of their initiators to raise money. There is always the risk that referenda could be called with a view to restricting the fundamental rights of minorities as the Swiss constitution would emphasize slightly more the principle of direct democracy than the protection of Human Rights. (The most telling recent example was the 2009 anti-minaret referendum, thanks to which 'there was now a dead article in our constitution'.) Public education about the instruments of direct democracy would also need some improvement.

It is essential to note that the Swiss concept of direct democracy is constantly being improved. The 2009 introduction of e-voting has helped further to increase the turnout at referenda, attracted young people and improved efficiency.

The Swiss example has certainly inspired Sweden to introduce municipal referenda in its 2011 constitutional reform. Since then many initiatives have been launched to encourage citizens to get involved and become active such as the informative Falun Democracy Passport, distributed at the lab. Sweden had also started with projects to hone the democratic competencies and skills of people.

The Californian private initiative 'Make your laws' ventured to go one step further by offering engaged citizens the possibility to contribute on-line directly to the legislative drafting process on state level.

Discussions were rather marked by scepticism than enthusiasm. Discussants from the so called 'post-communist' democracies, but also from African countries feared that their societies were not yet mature enough for having strong elements of direct democracy in their constitutions. It was also suspected that direct democracy could only work in countries with a comparatively small population. It was equally interesting to see that some discussants saw direct democracy as a higher source of legitimation for political acts, such as the declaration of independence of Catalonia, compared to the national constitution.

In conclusion, it would be useful if education for democratic citizenship could put in the future more emphasis on the concept of direct democracy, what can be expected from it and how to wisely use its instruments.

Crowd-funding & public policy

Is civic crowd-funding an adequate way of raising resources to fund public infrastructure and projects of cash-strapped local governments, increasing citizen engagement and ownership and giving a chance to smaller, less influential groups to promote their projects? Can it lead to weakening public authorities' responsibility in funding important services and works from the public budgets?

Presenters

Mr Jordan Tyler RAYNOR, Co-founder of Citizinvestor, USA
 Ms Kara Marie RAYNOR, Staff Accountant at Citizinvestor, USA

Discussants

Ms Charlotte NØRLUND-MATTHIESSEN, France, Co-founder and COO of ClicknSign
 Mr Apolonio RUIZ-LIGERO, Spain, Vice-Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank
 Ms Hala SULAIMAN, Communications Consultant, Bahrain
 Mr Yusmadi YUSOFF, Former Member of the Parliament, Malaysia

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mrs Andrée BUCHMANN, France, Member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Moderator

Mr Stefano DOMINIONI, Head of Division, Europe Division, Office of the Directorate General of Programmes, Council of Europe

Discussions took as a starting point the presentation of the U.S.A. initiative "Citizinvestor". It promotes crowdfunding, ie civic participatory financing, through which small local projects (at a current average of 13,000 Dollars) initiated or supported by a municipal authority but which lack sufficient funding, can be financed by citizens. The discussion focused on the pertinence and impact of such initiatives on society and political life, in particular at the local level.

One clear outcome was that crowdfunding should never replace taxation systems through which governments raise financial resources to implement projects for the benefit of citizens. However, it should not be excluded that in the future a certain percentage of a budget could be covered by donations from citizens. Therefore, crowdfunding needs to remain a complementary source of funding which intervenes alongside tax resources but also financial tools such as the the Council of Europe Development Bank, which provides financing for socially beneficial projects.

One of the potential benefits of crowdfunding is to foster the engagement of citizens in political life, in the context of a steady decline of citizen participation in formal electoral politics. This is a form of direct participation in local decision-making which, by letting citizens finance a project implemented by the authorities, makes the latter directly accountable to citizens and therefore promote trust. In order to achieve this, adequate mechanisms of reporting & accountability need to be put in place. The fact that a project is directly funded by the public puts pressure on the authorities to ensure that there are no cost overruns in the implementation - a situation all too often encountered. Crowdfunding can therefore indirectly enhance the culture of accountability, fiscal restraint and financial rigour within local authorities.

It is also important to ensure that citizens themselves can propose ideas for projects and that there is a framework for their consideration by the local authority.

One should not, however, create a situation where the authorities escape from their duty, leaving the entire field of public welfare investment to citizen funding schemes. The opposite risk is that governments, for fear of losing their authority, establish a regulatory framework, even legislation that could stifle this growing sector of society.

The growth of civic crowdfunding will depend not only on regulatory frameworks and the development of technology, but also on the wider cultural, philosophical, even religious

values of different countries and regions worldwide. The expectation of the citizens of Scandinavian countries for higher taxation and higher public authority intervention is different from what Americans expect their government. Systems such as the "Zakat" (compulsory charity donation) in Muslim countries, is both a means of satisfying religious duties, and contributing to projects of social value.

Is it also conceivable that crowdfunding develops beyond the local level? Initiatives undertaken in the United States by three state governments indicate that this is indeed a possible development, and that potential benefits and risks are more or less the same. In all cases, it will be important to ensure that projects financed in this way are environmentally sound in order to contribute to development at local, regional and national levels.

The rise of the Wikicity

Giving citizens the initiative and control over policies reverses the traditional model of policy-making – what are the results of wikicity experiments so far, as well as challenges encountered?

Presenters

Mr Daniel DE ANDRADE BITTENCOURT, Co-founder of Lung, Brazil
Ms Maria Clara JOBST DE AQUINO BITTENCOURT, Content Manager of PortoAlegre.cc, Brazil

Discussants

Ms Anne-Marie CHAVANON, France, Chair of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee of the INGO Conference
Mr William ECHIKSON, Head of Communications and Public Affairs for Free Expression in Europe, Middle East and Africa, Google
Mr Philippe C. SCHMITTER, USA, Emeritus Professor at the European University Institute Florence

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Diego Antonino CIMINO, Italy, Youth Representative, Student Officer at International Law Student Association

Moderator

Mr Eladio FERNANDEZ-GALIANO, Head of Department, Directorate of Democratic Governance, DG II, Council of Europe

Discussion focused the question whether and how technology can help reinforce local democracy, taking as a starting point the experience and critique of the "wikicity" concept developed by the "Portoalegre.cc" initiative. The "wikicity" can be defined as an "on line platform for storing, exchanging and processing data which are location- and time-sensitive". The model of Porto Alegre.cc wiki city relies on the voluntary contributions of citizens through an on-line platform in which they everyone can provide content on places, events, and issues relevant to life in the city. Can this model increase significantly citizens influence in the policy-making process and to make democratic institutions more transparent, responsive and accountable?

What has motivated the development of the wikicity? It has been directly linked with the crisis of the traditional representative democracy. Representative democracy has become increasingly incapable of addressing problems and issues affecting citizens because of de-territorialization of society activities and communication and their disconnection from power at local, regional and national levels. As a consequence of the loss of legitimacy of modern

representative democracy, the demands for alternative forms of engagement became louder and this is the real reason why today we need to speak about the “need” of wikicities. The wikicity approach, as per the Porto Alegre experience, might succeed in re-establishing the link between citizens and local government and the results has been satisfactory: 2.000 registered users, more than 1800 causes featured on the platform, one initiative started from the platform brought 10.000 citizens to the street in Porto Alegre (which is an illustration of the fact that web communication can mobilise but influence is only effective if citizens engage in the real world).

Civik wiki platforms are however not without challenges. Firstly, it is important to find a balance between civic participation and the action of the local authority. Some proponents of participatory democracy believe that it is possible to make politics without politicians. This is one of the most critical points of tension between participatory democracy and representative democracy. In Porto Alegre case, the balance has been achieved by creating a solid cooperation with Porto Alegre’s City Hall. Secondly, privacy issues due to data on line urge for regulation. And lastly, for a successful wikicity it is important to stress the importance of the “digital cycle”, the interplay between digital participation and real-life participation. Technology is not sufficient to enable real impact of citizens’ voices, even in the digital age. This is why the initiative needs to be dynamic and stimulate greater participation of citizens in more classical forms of political life.

E-enabled participatory budgeting

How successful participatory budgeting is in fostering dialogue and trust between citizen and authorities?

What can we learn from experience in order to avoid tokenism and avoid alienating local elected officials who may feel deprived of their influence and prerogatives or that having the process hijacked by some interest groups?

Presenter

Ms Áurea DANTAS, Finance Department, Town Hall of Amadora, Portugal
Mr Joe MOORE, Alderman of the 49th Ward of Chicago, USA

Discussants

Mr Oliver HENMAN, United Kingdom, Head of the EU & International team at NCVO
Mr Andris JAUNSLEINIS, Latvia, Councillor of Ventspils municipality, Member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and Head of the Latvian Delegation
Mr Igor KOLMAN, Member of Parliament, Croatia, Third Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Mr Enrico PACE, Journalist, Italy

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Charles-Edouard HELD, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the Council of Europe

Moderator

Mr Mario MARTINS, Director General, Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Participatory budgeting is a type of participatory democracy which enables the population (comprising citizens and other residents) to contribute to decisions about allocating part of local public budget (usually capital expenditure), while increasing transparency and accountability of local politics. This process – originating from the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil as of 1989 – offered opportunities for the local public to propose or identify, discuss and prioritise worthy projects to be funded from the local budget.

The movement of participatory budgeting has since spread worldwide, taking different forms, mainly consultative or deliberative. Around 3 000 cities are practicing participatory budgeting. At the Council of Europe level, participatory budgeting has been explicitly supported and promoted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

The point of departure for discussions were presentations about the functioning of participatory budgeting in Amadora (a town near Lisbon in Portugal) and in one of the districts of Chicago (USA).

The consultative process was introduced in Amadora in 2010 and allows local inhabitants to put forward initiatives or get informed about project proposals and later on to vote on them. Public guidelines for project assessment were published on the municipality's website and this was deemed to be a crucial step towards boosting transparency and participation levels. Indeed, e-format made consultation and voting processes much more accessible and did not require residents to physically go to their municipality. Moreover, the existing project proposals could be consulted and compared more easily, thus avoiding duplication. In 2012-2013, about € 500,000 were attributed annually through this process for projects in favour of young people, children, families and population with special needs, covering both infrastructure (such as schools, child care facilities) and services (for instance, sanitation).

Participatory budgeting made its way to the United States as a means of combating corruption at local level and enhancing the relevance of local projects. In The 49th District of Chicago, USA, a "ladder" of interaction included the stages of listening to the local population, online communication, focus groups for consultation, citizen boards for considering projects (limited participation) and finally voting (full participation). As a result of citizen consultation, the expenditure structure of local municipality changed considerably, illustrating the usefulness of the whole exercise. In 2013, from a budget of USD 1.3 million about USD 1 million in expenditure was decided by residents. It appeared that local population was particularly attentive to budgetary choices during the economic crisis when spending cuts had to be made.

Discussions highlighted the importance of participatory budgeting in ensuring more effective allocation of funds and in assessing local needs more realistically. Special provisions also gave voice to the most disadvantaged or vulnerable population groups and enabled inter-generational dialogue, thus fostering more solidarity and long-term engagement. Several participants stressed the need to make information not only more accessible, but also easier to understand so as to assess the pertinence of spending decisions. Local media could be particularly useful for that, notably in localities where modern technologies had not penetrated widely enough.

The downside of participatory budgeting was the risk to face a refusal from residents to support certain essential projects if their financing implied a rise in local taxes. This problem should not be underestimated in times of economic crisis when many inhabitants were confronted with salary cuts and joblessness. At the same time, economic hardship made citizen choices even more relevant and cost-aware, in particular for deciding what local public services should be limited, cut or changed.

One issue with participatory budgeting was how to root it in the local political culture so as to ensure continuity of projects and transparency of the process itself. Special attention was

required to secure balanced participation of various population groups in order to prevent vested interest groups from taking over the process to their own advantage. This problem could possibly be at least partly circumvented by establishing clear “rules of the game” from the outset and seeking a broad consensus of all participants in the process.

However, mobilising local participation was a challenge on its own: in many localities using participatory budgeting participation levels did not exceed 1% of the residents, which was not necessarily representative of local public opinion. Awareness raising and educational function of participatory budgeting was part and parcel for rebuilding public trust in politicians and politics. New information technologies could be particularly useful in that respect.

Although participatory budgeting could be part of the large-scale democratic process – such as in Switzerland where population was regularly consulted through referenda – this process seemed much more realistic at local level and could actually be seen as the heart of local politics. That said, local politicians had the responsibility for duly organising the process of public consultation, provided they had sufficient powers for that through decentralisation. In fact, participatory budgeting could be considered as both the means for boosting democratic participation and a goal in itself because the process mattered and could influence the outcomes. Indeed, a backlash against politics could be harsh if the public got the impression that it was not listened to and would become disillusioned with participatory budgeting as a democratic way of influencing decisions.

Participatory democracy, including participatory budgeting, should not be seen as an alternative to representative democracy, but the two types of democracy were complementary and could feed each other. Participatory budgeting process – increasingly popular and overall a positive experience – remained often linked to the political agenda of local authorities and could be best exploited when it was adapted to local circumstances. The key challenge was to encourage participation of all population groups, to keep good balance between the prerogatives of local elected representatives, administrative structures and public consultation, as well as ensuring adequate implementation of decisions reached jointly.

The main advantage of participatory budgeting lays in the pedagogical nature of the process, which gives the public a sense of ownership, involvement in relation to the political and social life of the community. It also promotes transparency between the government and the people.

Participatory budgeting’s main challenge lies in its necessarily limited scope. The budget represents the essence of politics, founded on of electoral programs that must be implemented. This raises the need for a balance between participatory democracy and representative democracy. An additional challenge is to ensure that the process of consultation and decision-making is truly representative of the entire resident population and includes in particular the youth, but also the poor and minorities. Thought must be given to the means to avoid the debate being fragmented and even captured by some interest groups including businesses. Given these challenges, the development of a standard methodology for BP would be beneficial.

Digital local democracy

Thanks to e-participation platforms run by local authorities and NGOs, citizens have more opportunities to participate in the decision-making and improve governance at local level. What are the lessons learnt and the obstacles to mainstreaming such approaches? What kind of platform/technology would be the best to improve citizen participation at local level?

Presenters

Mr Benjamin Michael KNIGHT, Loomio Social Enterprise, New Zealand
 Ms Deirdre LEE, Ireland, Research Associate in the eGovernment group at Digital Enterprise Research Institute (DERI), NUI Galway
 Ms Vivien Rae MAIDABORN, Loomio Social Enterprise, New Zealand
 Mr Pedro PRIETO MARTIN, Spain, Founding President of the Asociación KyoPol - Symbiotic City

Discussants

Mr Steven CLIFT, USA, Founder and Executive Director of E-Democracy.org
 Mr Sorin IONITA, Research Director of Expert Forum, Romania
 Mr Toomas SEPP, Estonia, Chief Executive Officer, Tallinn City Office

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Clemens LAMMERSKITTEN, Germany, Member of the Lower Saxon Parliament and Vice-President of the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Moderator

Mr Dan POPESCU, Head of the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, Council of Europe

So, how do local authorities reach out to a wider audience and go beyond the syndrome known as nimbyism- or not in my back yard. How do we build communities of citizens who care generally for their home towns and are interested in how the community budget is spent and whether they are getting best value for money? And is digital democracy really the answer?

Several local e-participation initiatives were analysed in an attempt to find answer to these questions. Puzzled by Policy (European Union project) combines innovative and interactive online tools to engage citizens in the policy-making process. Loomio (New Zealand) is an online platform for community governance and collaborative decision-making. KyoPol's (Spain) project aims to provide a free non-partisan environment to foster municipal civic participation.

During the discussions, it was acknowledged that the increasing use of Internet as a means for local people to express their opinions runs the risk of the proliferation of digital platforms, turning local opinions into local background noise with little impact. While some felt that a multitude of projects was the way forward, given the pace of technological change, others preferred that public funding be used to support the most successful digital projects only.

The role to be played by public authorities was raised. Should they help incubate the platforms, would it advance or hinder the democratic process if they supported the ones they considered best? Or were platforms best left as grass roots Initiatives, with little official interference? In this connection, the importance of getting policy-makers on board for increasing an initiative's impact was recognised, as well as the need to popularise systems among citizens. The experience of the presenters showed that establishing connections between grass roots initiatives and policy-makers was something of an organic process: as a system grows in popularity, policy-makers become aware of the need to investigate, indeed feel a pressure to investigate and subsequently to act on the concerns raised by the system. A pragmatic, multidisciplinary approach was advocated as an effective means for popularising such initiatives, eg mixing local politics, with local commercial needs or local private concerns. Indeed, in the US, lost cats are the no. 1 recruiting tool for citizen participation applications, while labelling a platform as political would seem to be a significant deterrent.

Finally the discussion focused on what the Council of Europe could do now that digital platforms had established themselves as legitimate democratic tools. Proposals were put forward for the Council of Europe to support the development of software, to bring people together by providing opportunities for discussion such as the forum. It could collect and disseminate best practice, as well as put together toolkits and offer guidance. In so doing, the Council of Europe would need to identify the best, or reflect on what ingredients produce the “best-for-the-moment”, since none are infallible. From this ground work solutions could be found. The solutions should comprise an amalgam of fixed and transient elements, the aim of which is to provide a solid base to work from, as well a means for keeping in step with the digital age’s more fickle and amorphous nature. Solutions can be translated into lists of best practice, guidelines, standards and/or practical toolkits, enabling the Council of Europe to disseminate Europe-wide good practices and essential practices at the local, regional and national levels alike.

Theme 4: Envisioning the Future

Modern democracies are accused of being unable to generate consensus over a long-term vision for society. Grassroots actors are using ICT and the web to mobilise young people to envision the future; media are trying new ways of building a virtual public sphere for political deliberation and crowd-source strategic solutions for key societal challenges. Whether institutions, including the European Union (EU), are able to integrate such tools into policy-making, will to a large extent determine their future.

Skills for democracy

E-government is supposed to improve the quality of government by providing public information and services online but is often conceived in a top-down way with little scope for citizen input and influence. Online tools now make it possible for citizens and service users to keep service providers in check by using collective intelligence and public pressure. How successful such initiatives are, what hurdles do they need to overcome and can this become a widespread practice, especially in developing countries?

Presenters

Ms Otika Brenda AKITE, Rural Projects Manager with Women of Uganda Network, Uganda

Ms Mariam MEMARSADEGHI, Iran, Co-founder and co-director of the E-Collaborative for Civic Education and Tavaana: E-Learning Institute for Iranian Civil Society

Ms Goretti ZAVUGA AMURIAT, Senior Program Officer for the Gender and ICT Policy Advocacy Program of Wougnet, Uganda

Discussants

Ms Gabriella BATTAINI-DRAGONI, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Ms Carolyn BENNETT, Canada, Member of Parliament, Chair of Liberal Women's Caucus

Mr Jean-Luc SIMON, France, Chair of Disabled Peoples' International

Ms Anne WIZOREK, Blogger, Digital Media Consultant, Germany

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Kay-Michael DANKL, Austria, Youth Representative, Student Activist

Moderator

Ms Yulia PERERVA, Head of Unit on Citizenship and Human Rights
Education, Education Department, Council of Europe

Education for democratic citizenship at school, in out-of school environments and through active participation in school and public life from an early age is a key issue for sustainable democracy. New technologies can facilitate this, even in countries with autocratic regimes democratic online technologies give people opportunities for learning skills of democracy they would not have offline considering the repressive political system.

An example is the “Women of Uganda Network”, a NGO founded in 2000 by several women’s organisations. Its aim is to improve good governance and public services. The main idea is to strengthen local communities’ capacity to use technologies to monitor authorities and to collect and share information on corruption and poor public services. The Network has, among other projects, conducted awareness-raising and ICT capacity building workshops, formed Voluntary Social Accountability Committees, provided communities with cameras and mobile phones, and disseminated information on various online platforms in 5 districts in Northern Uganda. Following this approach, communities have been able to build public pressure on officials reluctant to repair damaged roads, responsible for the flawed construction of public buildings (such as schools) or unwilling to provide for access to safe drinking water.

Another example of e-enabled citizenship learning is “Tavaana: E-Learning Institute for Iranian Civil Society” launched in 2010. It provides an online education programme on issues related to democracy. Tavaana offers free and anonymous access to interactive e-learning platforms. It has trained over 1,800 Iranians in live e-classrooms on topics ranging from digital safety, trauma healing to women’s rights. In addition to its satellite TV programme, which reaches 9 million Iranians each week, it has distributed learning resources – including e-books and manuals, translations, video and podcast lectures, and case studies – to thousands more. For a high degree of ownership, the resources and curricula that are provided by international partners are adapted to the Iranian context. While online education cannot replace offline activism on the ground, it does help passionate activists make informed decisions about which risk one is willing to accept.

Key challenges for such actions concern the protection of those involved, ensuring the sustainability of the programme considering the current external funding; providing adequate opportunities for people with disabilities to be involved? In order to ensure impact, the projects need to be managed by the community.

These projects illustrate how online tools can be used for offline change in societies with repressive political systems or with enormous socio-economic challenges. However, they also raise concerns around privacy and safety online, women’s participation as well as questions of ownership, transferability and sustainability.

Providing citizenship education online in conditions of repression requires anonymity and necessarily isolates users from each other – the challenge is to create a community which is capable of action, and this requires other tools, including real-life meetings.

Involving people with disabilities in the online participation processes is a challenge that is seldom taken up by mainstream organisations.

Anonymity and safety online are important issues. Protection from government surveillance and repression can never be guaranteed to 100%. However, without these online tools people would lose many opportunities and would be much more at risk offline. While online

education cannot replace offline activism on the ground, it does help passionate activists make informed decisions about which risk one is willing to accept.

„Good governance is asking, not telling“. Not only in the so-called “developing countries” the top-down approaches of authorities must be complemented by bottom-up-initiatives. In states with undemocratic governments or poorly functioning public services, one major problem is that the partners on the side of government for cooperating with citizens are missing. If social media and other tools are not used by officials and politicians, their potential for change is limited.

Finally, rather than considering online tools as a threat to democracy, we see in many societies in transformation they can make valuable, even crucial, contributions to the establishment and strengthening of democracy.

Making films, making society

Internet enables people, in particular young people, to express their social and political views and aspirations by various means, including through art and games, and to receive feedback from the wider community. Do these forms of expression have a real impact on public opinion, political debate and decision-making or are they just an outlet for the emotions of a frustrated youth?

Presenters

Mr Aldo ARCE, Mexico, Founder of Puerta Joven

Ms Syhem BELKHODJA, Artist choreographer, Tunisia

Mr Tarak TABKA, Founder of the Ness El Fen Association, Tunisia

Discussants

Mr Michal MLCOUSEK, Slovakia, Executive Producer at Time for Words

Mr Petre ROMAN, Romania, Former Prime Minister of Romania and Member of the Club de Madrid

Ms Patrycja SASNAL, Poland, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Project, Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM)

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Mr Engin SOYSAL, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the Council of Europe

Moderator

Mr Roberto OLLA, Executive Director, Council of Europe

Nesselfen is an association of artists working in different fields which participates in the debate on the future of democracy in Tunisia by making and publishing a series of web documentaries under the banner Tunisie 4.0. Artists of all ages are invited to film their varied visions of democracy and to present different possible scenarios for the evolution of Tunisian society. The web documentaries are organised around four principal axes: Islam, technology, democracy and geo-politics. The result is a kaleidoscope of images, visions and interpretations of democracy in Tunisia.

Lenguas Jovenes, Puerta Joven, Mexico allows young indigenous people recently migrated to the city to reflect upon what they would like to change in their lives. Working through schools and community centres, the initiative helps them use new technology to film real life situations illustrating their ideas. The resulting films are used to interact with local authorities with the aim of ensuring that the young people’s views are taken into account in the

formation of local policy. The result is improved social integration in relation to local democratic institutions.

The discussion centred on the difficulty of building democracy in a situation of transition and the role which art and artists could play in this context. The initiators of the project believed that it could help Tunisians explore who they were in a time of confusion and encourage reflection as to the kind of democracy that could be put in place. They observed that the younger generation in Tunisia had to a large extent lost touch with Europe and that democratic ideals seemed too complex to many Tunisians. Discussants expressed reserves about the mixture of the real and the fictional in the web documentaries, which could therefore appear manipulative, particularly outside of the Tunisian context, and noted that the films could be seen as simply documenting the splits in society rather than creating real dialogue. However, the project leaders maintained that audience reaction during the public presentations of the films confirmed that the distinction between real and the fictional was clear to Tunisian viewers and that the content of the films had led to dialogue, both at public presentations and via internet commentaries.

The discussion also underlined the power of images to provide a specific view of events and indeed replace real events with a manipulated vision. At the same time new technologies can reinforce the power to act at grass roots level, a situation which needed imperatively to be recognised by political elites, in order to avoid increasing disillusionment and a real risk to democracy.

As the second initiative, *Lenguas Jovenes*, takes the form of empowerment of young people at a local level, discussion focused mainly on sustainability and the possibility of measuring the impact of the project. The project initiator explained that the project was a system to connect young citizens with local government, with filmmaking providing a way of bringing young people in and involving them in a larger task. Local government representatives are invited to view films at regular intervals, to discuss them with the authors and to respond with action in that area. The next step for the young people is their integration into thematic committees which work on designing strategies to respond to the problems identified. The effective implementation by local government of proposals arising from these committees can be used to measure the impact of the project. Discussants noted that the project demonstrated many positive aspects; it moved beyond film to engage face-to-face dialogue; it ensured youth participation in democratic processes at the ground level and it combined effectively both cultural and social reality.

The capacity of these initiatives to foster inter-generational dialogue and break down barriers between different segments of society were the principal opportunities identified. In both cases a form of expression – moving images – is used to engage the public or a specific segment of the public, and to provide a support for their reflection, facilitated by new technology. Participants underlined the need to seize the opportunity that internet provided to push both democratic and undemocratic societies to a transition that would provide for greater empowerment at grass roots level together with increased transparency and greater accountability on the part of politicians.

Two main risks are associated with this type of initiative. The first is the high level of responsibility which must be assumed by the authors of such initiatives. By its nature, art involves using fiction to communicate a message effectively. However such departure from 'truth' embodies in itself a risk given the power of the image to affect perceptions of reality and to shape how messages are understood. This issue could possibly be addressed through high levels of transparency on the part of the authors of such initiatives. It formed however, part of a larger problem, which was that of the absence of a universal legal framework for Internet and a widely-accepted deontological code for its use.

The points for future action arising from the panel discussions were the necessity to recognise that this place of intersection of art, technology and democracy was still very much an area in construction. The message for Europe and for the Council of Europe should be that a level of humility in approach was necessary; admitting the necessity of a critical approach to these developments but at the same time recognising, in a spirit of generosity and authenticity, their importance to the advancement of democracy.

Solution journalism in action

Can harnessing collective intelligence and knowledge make media a more constructive and relevant participant in the democratic debate? The Guardian believes it can.

Presenters

Mr Yasir MIRZA, Head of Diversity & Inclusion, Guardian News & Media, United Kingdom

Mr Michael WEGENER, Germany, Head of content center at ARD News

Discussants

Mr Shahidul ALAM, Bangladesh, Photographer, Blogger and Activist

Ms Lorena BOIX ALONSO, Spain, Head of Unit for Converging Media and Content Unit, Directorate General for Communications Networks Content and Technology, European Commission

Mr Guillermo FARIÑAS, Cuba, Independent journalist and political dissident

Mr Jason MILLS, United Kingdom, Journalist at ITN

Mr Waichi SEKIGUCHI, Japan, Editorial writer and columnist of Nikkei Newspaper

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Lusine SHAKHAZIZYAN, Armenia, Youth Representative, Press Secretary of "Art for Peace"

Moderator

Ms Susanne NIKOLTCHEV, Executive Director European Audiovisual Observatory, Council of Europe

The Guardian's Open Journalism and Marginalized Voices initiative turns readers into journalists, giving them an opportunity to write about what is going on in their communities. In this way, it intends to make a positive impact on social progress in communities. The initiative is an illustration of the power of digital journalism where information is produced collaboratively and shared in a more "liquid" or fluid way. This type of journalism restores contact between journalists with readers, some of whom may know more than the journalist on a given subject.

Open journalism is about an on-going dialogue between journalists and readers, solution journalism is about harnessing grassroots knowledge and power to enable change. An example of this is a project carried out in India as a partnership between Google and the Guardian. It involved representatives of disadvantaged communities, people of lower sects, people with disabilities etc., training them how to write a story, send an sms, how to communicate with others and make themselves heard. Articles produced related to pollution, forced child labor, and other critical problems. This has led to another project to be undertaken in India – the creation of a media platform to find solutions to social and environmental problems and to give the floor to those whose voice is not heard today. Traditional media only focus on marginalised people when a disaster or an uprising occurs. Now they are a part of the daily stream of information.

The challenges that digital information and social media represent for public broadcasters – they produce high-quality, trusted information but are losing audience, in particular among the young. Young people do not want to wait for the next news bulletin, they want the information instantly.

Discussions evolved around the possibility for broadcasters to use social media as a new source for issues and stories, and acting as a playout platform; to keep their brand, but at the same time to see the exclusive angles of a story and to have younger audience.

Social media can be also viewed as a challenge to traditional broadcasters, demanding more transparency and more “information democracy”. However, social media has its own issues with accountability, verification, transparency, objectivity and credibility. It is questionable whether citizen journalism can have real credibility and whether such journalism can be objective and citizen journalism raises concerns about the protection of citizens as sources and as journalists, in particular in countries with authoritarian regimes. There is no easy regulatory or technological solution to this issue and the dilemma between authentication of sources and the safety of bloggers and citizen reporters is critical.

ARD News (German public broadcaster) has learned to use these tools to address new issues. ARD has developed systems for verification of sources, these media as new sources of information whether in Germany or elsewhere.

ARD still has its newscast but on these platforms social forms develop exclusive interviews specifically for digital platforms. Via Twitter and Facebook it has discovered new, younger audiences and has created new relationships with viewers. For example, when the Pope announced his wish to reform the Catholic Church, ARD made a survey, asking viewers for their opinions. There were 800 comments on Facebook. Now Twitter is influencing editorial choices, crowdsourcing is used to define interview questions to Ministers, to find new angles and perspectives. These are exciting developments but it is important to put in place a number of rules for monitoring and verification of information and to also make sure that journalists remain in their role of journalists and do not turn into activists.

There are also rules of behaviour: a netiquette is in place to control messages, hate speech and racist messages are removed and authors denied access to the forum. Social Media should also train their staff so that it can respond to questions and criticism, to be able to capture important issues and move them up on the agenda.

Electronic information democracy is positive only insofar as the platforms are safe and reliable, verifiable and authenticated. At the same time the distributed information collection on social media is resilient: for example during and after the last big earthquake in Japan there was no electricity and the production of newspapers was disrupted. However, news still travelled on the internet and social media. An internet platform for disaster reporting, based on a software created in Kenya was very useful – proving that the notions of developed countries and mature democracies are no longer solid when it comes to digital information and participation.

While social media can offset some of the negative effects of media concentration, there is the phenomenon of convergence of media that can increase concentration.

Empowerment in the light of EU trends 2030

There is no universally accepted definition of empowerment or easy way to measure its evolution over time. Two major initiatives help to unpack this concept and assess what is in it for the future of democracy. Discussions will be held to account from a gender perspective. The results of this lab will contribute to a policy report with options and challenges for the EU in the next decade, in the context of ESPAS ("European Strategy and Policy Analysis System") the EU inter-institutional foresight project on global trends 2030.

Presenters

Mr Benoit DERENNE, Belgium, Founder and Director of the Foundation for Future Generations

Ms Nicole DEWANDRE, Belgium, Advisor to the Director General for Communications, Networks, Content and Technologies at the European Commission

Discussants

Mr Franck R. DEBIE, Chair of the ESPAS Inter-institutional Working Group on the future of European Society and Team Leader for 'the European Parliament in 2025 Project' in the Cabinet of the General Secretary at the European Parliament

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH, Member of Parliament, Austria, Member of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Ms Sylvia WALBY, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and UNESCO Chair in Gender Research, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Tess HELLGREN, Researcher in the Defence and Security Programme at RAND Europe

Moderator

Ms Agnès HUBERT, France, Adviser in the Bureau of European Policy Advisers

This session discussed empowerment and democracy on both the theoretical and practical levels and addressed two main questions: how are we to define and understand empowerment in the current age of hyperconnectivity? How are we to improve the infusion of empowerment into existing democratic processes?

These questions were addressed through two key initiatives: the Onlife Manifesto and the G1000.

Onlife Manifesto is an initiative that explores the uptake of ICTs and their implications for individuals, society, and the state. By bringing together scholars from many disciplinary backgrounds, this manifesto aims to launch a public debate on the policy relevant consequences of the philosophical changes brought about by a world of hyper-connectivity. This involves rethinking our understanding of individuals' relationship to the state, to others, and to themselves. One concrete example of the disconnect between referential frames and the digitally enabled society is how to effectively protect privacy in the online domain.

From a more practical side, the G1000 is a citizens' summit in Belgium aimed to oxygenate democracy through innovative processes. In addition to a summit on contemporary political issues which involved over 700 randomly selected citizens, this initiative drew upon new

technologies through a large-scale online consultation, a remote-access capability, and an online crowd-funding mechanism which raised half a million Euros from 3500 donors to finance the initiative. The process itself represented a democratic innovation, as a result, it gave inspiration to traditional political parties for building their programmes. However, the initiative will probably not be repeated since it generated more frustration than results, because of the lack of connection with the formal political system.

The initiative allowed a total of over 1800 individuals to engage with democratic processes through not only discussion but also deliberation.

Discussion of these initiatives raised concerns about the relationship of empowerment and democracy, the risk of unequal empowerment, and the disconnect between idealism and implementation.

“Empowerment” requires changes in the deeper political structures since inequalities in society are reproduced (Habermas) by new deliberative processes/democracy; one person one vote must remain the main principle of democracy in the digital age. At the same time, the relationship between individual and society needs to be redefined and the online world needs to be regulated in a manner similar to the offline world. The knowledge gap in the knowledge society is creating real inequalities – in some countries a large percentage of people are illiterate. Much more than any other new type of democracy, a “democracy of knowledge”, is needed. In order to engage the young, we can learn from good ideas which exist – in Morocco, a list of young people exists from which political parties need to select candidates.

First, there needs to be a stronger debate about the relationship between the concepts for empowerment and democracy – not only within civil society, but also in terms of citizens’ access to wider social, economic, technological and political resources and representation.

Second, there is also the risk that processes of deliberative democracy will reproduce the inequalities which are embedded in society, with certain individuals having more or less power to participate. Attention was specifically drawn to the gendered dimension of inequality, as many women face disempowerment in not only the public but also the private domain. If new concepts of empowerment and democracy are to move forward, it is crucial that all individuals’ interests are being protected and represented.

And finally, the disconnect between idealism and implementation must be addressed. Innovative forms of democracy will be neither sustained nor impacted if they are not integrated into existing systems.

Three major recommendations were made for policymakers:

There must be reconsideration of the relationship between the state and the individual in the new world of hyper-connectivity. There is a need for the state to recognise individuals as simultaneously free and social beings in a digitally literate society, moving away from emphasis on transparency and control of digital lives and instead promoting the values of respect and fairness in the online domain.

There must be investment in research and development of innovative forms of democracy. This innovation must be conscientious in promoting equal empowerment of all citizens. And it must be willing to truly think outside the box, challenging ingrained conceptions of political parties and electoral processes, developing new democratic models which replace the principle of competition with the principle of cooperation.

Finally, established institutions must open up to allow these innovative processes of democracy and empowerment to ‘plug in’ to existing systems. Only through this integration will new conceptions of empowerment and democracy be able to play a real and sustained role in the political landscape.

Acting against online hate speech

How can the internet be used by young people as a space for learning and practicing democratic citizenship? What makes young people engage for human rights online and how does the internet facilitate online collaboration for human rights action?

Presenters

Mr Sergio BELFOR, Vice-chairperson of the Advisory Council on Youth

Discussants

Mr Ahmad ALHENDAWI, Jordan, United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

Mr Frédéric ANSART, France, Academy of Strasbourg

Ms Iulia GHEORGHE, Romania, Club de la Presse Strasbourg Europe

Mr Jonathan HAYOUN, France, President of the Union of Jewish Students of France

Ms Ana LÓPEZ, Spain, Blogger

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Nawel RAFIK-ELMRINI, France, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg

Moderator

Mr Rui GOMES, Head of division for Education and Training at the Youth Department of the Council of Europe

With the growing use of the Internet, it has become easier to spread ideas, share opinions and interact with each other. This phenomenon leads to an increase in the spread of anti-democratic ideas, of all sorts of hate content, thus leading to more intolerance and violence that can have an impact on the offline world. The anonymity of the users makes these violations of human dignity and integrity often unpunished. The No Hate Speech Movement is a European campaign launched by the Council of Europe that aims at raising awareness about hate speech online and ways to combat it.

This initiative is now supported by a network of 36 different sub-organisations in the different Council of Europe countries but the ambition is to grow bigger, with more countries and organisations joining. There is a special appeal for cities to become partners as well and join their national campaigns.

The questions addressed were: Is hate speech a real threat to democracy? What are the means we have to fight against it? How social networks can fight against hate speech and what are their policies? What is the role of the media? What is the role of education in promoting online democracy? Where does freedom of expression end and hate speech which is sanctioned by law begin. How do we deal with hate speech online without becoming part of what we are trying to stop? How can we provide for respect for human rights on the social media which is often seen as a kind of legal no man's land?

One of the key conclusions is that the key challenge is to make people responsible. In many countries, racism is not seen as an opinion, it is a crime. Web sites which allow racist statements to appear on their pages are also guilty of this crime.

Facebook users have to register with their real names, as anonymity encourages people to spread hateful content without the risk of being caught. There are also tools for reporting. If a user encounters hate speech online, he or she can report it and the hate content will be deleted. The risk is that it is difficult to see the difference between a bad joke and a hate speech discourse. Some Facebook users use hate speech themselves when they report hate speech. Participants however felt that it is not enough for social media sites to indicate that there is inappropriate content – they should stand up against it.

It is also important to make such statements traceable, to lift anonymity in order to allow the victims to complain against those who have undermined their human dignity.

In addition to regulation, it is important to work on the psychology of hate speech, the root factors that trigger it. People need to understand how important and powerful the words used on the Internet can be. Words can have a very destructive impact in the offline world – there is a clear link between hate speech and hate crime.

We should not only turn to governments to protect against hate speech, because there is a risk that an extended application of existing laws leads to censorship. Journalists have to pay special attention to the impact of the images they publicise because the clichés and stereotypes come often from media. Media should be careful when covering political discourse, as some politicians target vulnerable groups and reporting their discourse can normalise verbal violence. Partnerships with journalists and NGOs should be created to better mobilise and raise awareness. It is important to defend freedom of speech but it should be responsible free speech, where every stakeholder stands up to his or her responsibility.

There can be no freedom without responsibility and a need for making the young aware that it is also their responsibility. They have to understand from childhood that the internet is a different world but it is not a world in a vacuum, that a citizen in the real world is a citizen in the digital world as well with the same rights and responsibilities.

For instance, a “digital passport” that would be awarded at the end of the school education, after teaching students how to behave on the Internet, how to fight against hate speech and what the solutions to counter hateful content are. The Department of Education in Strasbourg is currently running a campaign on cyberbullying where young people are being taught what the actions they can take to tackle it are. The trained young people are then expected to train other young people, as they can have greater impact on their peers than institutions can.

Youth abstention at European elections – what solutions?

Does youth abstention in European elections pose a threat to democratic legitimacy? How can political parties increase the political engagement of young people, adapt to their needs and include them in their election campaigns?

Presenters

Mr Luis BOUZA GARCIA, Spain, College of Europe, Universidad Carlos III Madrid

Ms Jenny DE NIJS, Luxembourg, League of Young Voters in Europe

Mr Joan Manuel LANFRANCO PARI, Spain, Votewatch Europe

Discussants

Ms Lilia BENHADJI, France, Project Officer, ANACEJ (Association nationale des conseils d'enfants et des jeunes)

Mr Andrew BRADLEY, South Africa, Director, Office of International IDEA to the EU

Ms Julia REDA, Germany, President of the Young Pirates of Europe

Ms Biljana ZASOVA FRIEDERICH, Macedonian/French, Head of Programmes, Association of Local Democracy Agencies

Rapporteur to the Plenary session

Ms Lilla MERABET, France, Regional Councillor in Alsace and Vice-President of the "Youth, Social Economy and Solidarity" Commission

Moderator

Mr Francois FRIEDERICH, Head of Division Electoral Assistance, Council of Europe

Europe is a continent where we can express quite freely our democratic aspirations. This is a huge opportunity but unfortunately absenteeism of young people during elections is a major concern. Populist vote is gaining ground and there is an ever widening gap between politicians and voters. So we were wondering about the future of democracy in the world.

Democracy is becoming increasingly fragile. It can only be buttressed if youth have a full role to play. We cannot speak on behalf of young people, young people have to speak for themselves, so that they can ensure that democracy really prospers.

There are really exemplary initiatives, such as "Youth voters", which encourage young people to engage through non-governmental organisations that are looking for new ways to defend democracy, liberty and freedom of association. "Young voters" is a digital platform which is all about providing information on European Union issues, democracy related issues and it goes even further than that, by comparing the major political trends and candidates.

It helps interpret political dilemmas and programmes for young people in a language that appeals to them, that has not been crafted by spin-doctors. The platform helps young people understand whether subjects such as environment, employment and social cohesion are really being addressed by candidates, especially in the European elections.

Through the platform, young people can "lobby" candidates and have a genuine say. Another interesting initiative, in the Netherlands, is less serious minded but successful. Young people created an organisation to award a prize to the politician who has put out the most intelligible campaign for young people and there is prize for those who have run the least intelligible campaign. This initiative has had a huge impact. The worst candidate has now completely changed his campaign after getting the negative prize and the year afterwards he got the best prize and has been the best communicator on youth issues.

The best way to safeguard democracy and enhance the role of young people is to allow them to speak their minds freely and openly.

Closing debate 29 November 2013

Janez Lenarcic, Director of ODIHR emphasised the importance and usefulness of the Forum for the work of the ODIHR, in particular, as more than 65 percent of the citizens in its member states have regular access to internet. Mr Lenarcic drew the following conclusions from the Forum:

Traditional institutions face challenges of legitimacy and decreasing party membership. Political institutions suffer from low levels of trust in leaders and parliaments as well as from low participation in elections. Although traditional politics must change and governments should adapt to the digital age, policy-making needs to remain accountable. One has to keep in mind that more people participate in elections than online and that strong online activist groups might capture digital initiatives for their own purposes. Mr Lenarcic added that today it is possible for some to monopolize information. On the other hand, the internet enables citizens to mobilize easier as it lowers barriers of coordination efforts of online groups, it offers more possibilities to interact with political institutions, and expands the space for public discourse.

In this context, governments need to be more assessable, responsive and accountable. They need to respect citizens' rights both online and offline. The Snowden case has shown that citizens believe strongly in the rights of privacy and protection of data. At the same time, they have to be aware of the risks that are involved in online tools. More research should be a priority in order to examine how citizens use information as well as to determine the accessibility and usability of websites and applications aimed at increasing citizen's participation. The internet should be used to strengthen communication and partnerships between officials and citizens. New technologies can help to revitalise democracy which should remain the only system of government for nations.

Andrew Bradley, Office of International IDEA to the EU, underlined that there are two sides to democracy: one is citizen participation, the other is representation. Together, these two concepts ensure that democracy follows the will of the people. In this context, one necessarily has to speak of political parties. However, these parties are losing trust and members in many countries. Representative democracy cannot exist without parties, but for them to remain relevant they need to become more attractive, in particular for young people. Parties are also important to ensure full participation of women in politics. As today women comprise only 1/5 of parliament members, further underrepresentation of women will lead to a dangerous democratic deficit.

Furthermore, Mr Bradley brought up the questions whether democracy is evolving according to the needs and demands of the citizens around the world and how institutions can be connected to these demands. He emphasized that democracy is not only about elections and institutions but more fundamentally about people. New technologies can change the way of interaction between governments and citizens and enhance transparency and access to information. However, the advantages that these technologies bring are sometimes accompanied by limits regarding the depth of consultation as many tools favour quantity over quality of input. Moreover, those with no access to technology might be left out and outlier opinions might falsely be taken as mainstream opinions. When concluding, Mr Bradley quoted Nelson Mandela: "There is no passion to be found playing small, in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living".

Agnes Hubert, Bureau of European Policy Advisors, pointed out that it has often been mentioned during the Forum, that internet is revolutionizing the way we speak of democracy. Ms Hubert, however, would rather speak of evolution instead of revolution. The following evolutions that are taking place regarding democracy: Firstly, the number of voters has

dropped. Secondly, young people are not interested so much in traditional party politics anymore, but are now more engaged in practical political action. Hence, the way in which politics is exercised is changing. Thirdly, new political processes need to be carried over into an institutional form. This has in particular become obvious during the Arab Spring. Fourthly, there is not only a technological but also human evolution taking place and changes do not remain in the political sphere but can also be found in the economic sphere.

Ms Hubert underlined the importance of the Forum's topic which has also been recognised by the European Commission (EC). The EC has established with other European partners ESPAS (European Strategy and Policy Analysis System), a forum for the future envisioning major trends as far as 2030. The Forum demonstrated that we live in a multi-centred society, and citizens are better educated as well as more emancipated. On the other hand, inequality will increase, not so much between countries, but ever more within countries. Citizen empowerment is often the main term in debates on this subject, but it remains unclear how empowerment is shaped and to whom it is addressed (bloggers, activists, hackers, ordinary citizens). Moreover, the question remains open whether empowerment is a democratic ideal.

Ms Hubert recognised that the major challenge in this context is to give citizens the capability to participate. Institutions should use democracy to re-invent democracy, as old mechanisms of ensuring a proper distribution of digital infrastructures are still suitable. ESPAS will incorporate empowerment in its recommendations that will focus on three elements: the necessity to research innovative forms of democracy at the level of European institutions, promote ways of reconceptualising relations between the state and the individual, and mechanisms to open institutions for innovative approaches in order to incorporate initiatives from the field.

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Closing address by Thorbjørn Jagland - Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Dear friends,

You have given me a very difficult task to summarize all that has happened here. Let me start by saying that this World Forum for Democracy has proved to be a truly exceptional experience, and all of you have given me a lot of new energy. Thank you for filling these halls with so many interesting, engaged, people with so many interesting ideas. I have tried to draw some conclusions, on five pieces of paper, so there will be five points.

On the first piece I have written 'digital tools can make democracy more transparent'. Initiatives like e-government, e-parliament, can of course reinforce ties between institutional bodies and the people, and also then create links between citizens and elected bodies.

On the second piece of paper I have written 'digital platforms may make democracies more responsive'. I think this is a crucial point, because the political parties are the cornerstones of democracy. I see no other way to organise democracy other than to have political parties, not necessarily the ones we have today, but parties that can set up, list, or nominate people for elections discussing and deciding upon political platforms. However these parties have to connect in a much better way to people than they are doing today. So I think that digital platforms can help political parties to respond more rapidly to grass-root inputs and better connect the political parties to the electorate.

The third point is that the digital platform can be a supplement to elected bodies. As I previously said I fail to see how elected bodies can be replaced by for instance social media. Social media is a very important tool but it cannot govern a country, it cannot govern a continent like Europe or at the global scale. These platforms can help reinvigorate elected representative bodies, and this is very important because there is, as many have said before me, clear evidence that representative bodies are no longer as representative as they should be. For instance, the numbers of party membership in European parties has fallen drastically over recent years, and what concerns me, which has not been so much in the debate, is that there are a number of marginalized people in our society and they don't have any say at all in any political body, neither in the political parties, nor in elected representative bodies, be it at the local or national level. All these marginalized people, where are they? I believe that, if we want to revitalize democracy we really have a very big potential here in giving them access to political parties and to political bodies.

This brings me to the fourth piece of paper. We have to step up online literacy. Digital tools may marginalize these groups even further. This development can create new dividing lines in our societies if we do not focus on education and give everyone access to the online tools. This is a very good tool, as I said, to empower marginalized people. There are however some dangers, which we have also spoken about during this forum. One is that this can increase political populism even further and I fear that if these new technologies fall in to the wrong hands they can be misused and even lead to modern forms of fascism. This development may also harm human rights. I have heard that everybody has a right to vote directly on an issue and by doing that influence political decision. All the same, we should bear in mind that we are not living in a society which is governed by majority rule any longer, because human rights constitute the limits of majority rule.

We are living in a constitutional democracy where universal rights constitute the limits of majority. A majority can't put the rights of a minority to a referendum. It is an obligation for a

majority to uphold the rights of any minority in the society; a point which Amin Maalouf stressed here at the opening session. This is even more important now that we have these tools to underline this basic concept of democracy. It is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the European Convention of Human Rights, which is the most concrete implementation of the universal declaration of human rights, namely that the rights enshrined in these documents are rights that you have as a human being.

These rights do not come from any law, they do not come from any authority, they come from the fact that you are a human being. Therefore majorities are not allowed to put these basic rights to a referendum or to any vote. We must keep these rights in mind when praising all these digital platforms which give people the right to push the button on any issue.

We also have to accept that these new technologies, new platforms and social media may harm private life. We must not forget that. What has been revealed by Snowden, for instance, scares me because if we are not able to combine the protection of private life with global communication what will suffer at the end of the day is of course global communication. People will no longer trust, for example the internet, if they see that their private life can be harmed and what is happening now is that a number of nation-states are discussing how they can protect their own mega-data. This can lead to what has been called a balkanization of the internet which is a threat to internet and is a threat to global freedom of expression. So that is why it is so important that nation-states take measures to protect the private life of every citizen.

What I have heard in the debate is that you should not spy on your friends, but what about those who are not your friends? You should not be allowed to spy on anybody if it is not being done under the law and under clear procedures. We have to protect the privacy of every individual whether you belong to a friendly nation or whether you belong to a not so-friendly nation. Private life is private life for everyone. Such threats are not only coming from the state authorities; they are coming from social media itself because it can be used to spread rumours and false allegations against private individuals.

Ladies and gentlemen, the enlightenment in Europe was built on the fact that there was always a curtain between private life and public life, and if this curtain is torn down we are all under heavy threat, so we need to respect the difference between private life and public life. As is already the case, rumours can firstly be spread on the internet and then on to the printed media afterwards. This is a threat to democracy itself.

So these were my five points, I would like to say at the end that we as political leaders have to ask ourselves if are we serving voters correctly, are they being heard, are they being understood? The answer is no, at least partially.

The big issue now is how we can use digital tools to remedy this, and how can we take advantage of the potential of the new communication tools and at the same time avoid all the dangers. If we think about this in a wider, historical perspective, I think that what is happening now is as deep as what happened during the second technological revolution that started in the midst of the 18th century and accelerated in the beginning of the 19th century. All the new machines and new technology that came shaped this technological revolution in the whole world.

This revolution led to new social classes, to all the political parties that we have in Europe today and in most of the world which were shaped during this time. Political ideologies were based on these deep technological transformations. What we have today stems from this technological revolution. I think that this technological revolution we are presently experiencing may have the same impact as the second technological revolution; that we may foresee a reshaping of the whole political landscape. I don't think that political parties will

fade away, but I am convinced that new ones will be shaped, based on the new pattern of production and social patterns.

We all have to keep our eyes and ears open and those who don't will simply fade away, they will die. Albert Einstein said, 'the brain is like a parachute, if it is not open it doesn't function'.

So thank you very much. Thank you very much for keeping all your brains open, you have given me a lot of energy and I will come back next year. Thanks.

* * *

IV. FORUM CONCLUSIONS

Political parties are losing the trust of our citizens, who are looking for ways and means to have their voice heard. Internet can offer such possibility, but is it also transforming the nature and functioning of democracy? More and more political and civic activities are moving online, but do citizens participate and influence decisions to a greater extent? Is there a risk that despite its positive potential, the use of digital communication technologies erode(s) civil and political rights, fragment(s) the democratic debate, and undermine(s) the capacity of representative institutions to shape a common position?

These questions were discussed by the 1,000 participants from more than 100 countries who gathered in Strasbourg, France, on 27-29 November at the World Forum for Democracy "Rewiring democracy – connecting citizens and institutions in the digital age", organised jointly by the Council of Europe, the French government, the Alsace Region and the city of Strasbourg.

Discussions were based on real-life examples. The twenty-one Forum Labs analysed thirty three digital participation platforms and initiatives, assessing their impact and the potential risks they carry for human rights and the integrity of democracy. Many of them reinforce the legitimacy, transparency and responsiveness of the governing institutions and help re-build a relationship of trust between citizens and their representatives. Others bring direct democracy elements into the representative system and create tension which may in turn reshape the institutional architecture of democracy.

These new developments do not, for the moment, constitute an alternative to representative democracy. Politics online is still mostly politics as usual. Digital communication tools have not so far produced a dramatic increase in public participation or trust in representative institutions, neither have they hailed the end of these institutions. However, the speed and scope of change are great, and we need to make sure that it reinforces, rather than weakening, democracy. In order to do so, the Forum pointed to some crucial tasks ahead of us:

- encourage/promote change in political parties to enable greater openness, transparency, accountability and responsiveness to grassroots input, including by exploiting e-initiatives
- ensure that e-participation schemes are transparent, auditable, and accountable to participants and the wider community and in conformity with the highest standards on protection of privacy
- step up media literacy to enable citizens to make full use of the opportunities of digital technology for self-empowerment and participation in political processes.

These tasks require strong partnerships between international and national actors; the CoE is ready to play its part and welcomes other partners in joining efforts to address these challenges.

The ***Council of Europe Democracy Innovation award*** was granted, based on the votes of participants, to **WOUGNET (Women of Uganda Network)**.

APPENDIX 1

Participant's suggestions for future Forum topics

The highest number of suggestions concern youth participation; diversity & migration

- Democracy and Youth; next time the forum should include youth issues and notably topics on ensuring peace in Europe
- Multicultural society, protection and integration of migrants (immigrants, people with disabilities, elderly)
- More about elections and technical solutions ; Election observation
- Crowdsourcing (and/or citizen science) environmental policy
- Alternatives to the current non transparent lobbying mechanisms (especially within the EU)
- New models of democracy; their concepts of democracy rather than participating (electoral) democracy
- Youth participation. What happens when a lot of young people are unemployed or "outsiders" in the society? How can immigrants participate? More gender questions. More international case-studies and real-world scenarios
- Towards an ideal democracy; New ways of citizen involvement
- European crisis and democracy; has democracy reached its limits, what are the alternatives? When in a crisis do countries need democracy?
- Early childhood education as a starting point for democracy ; Education and democracy : assessment of good practices
- Participation through NGOs; The role of the third sector to improve democracy.
- EU integration of South-Eastern and Eastern European countries; Democracy in economy between EU and non EU countries; Place of Young people in the future of Europe.
- Financing of open source e-democracy initiatives, bring together the people with the ideas and products and those with funding possibilities.
- All digital themes for Democracy; More ICT and less 'democracy talk'
- Interaction between NGOs and citizens groups. Public support for civic initiatives. Joining efforts of all sectors of the society for meeting global challenges. The credibility of NGOs
- Digital divide in the use of ICT
- Continuous diversified online platform issues perhaps with a more structured theme for example list them under political, economic, social, education and their impact on Democracy
- e-Democracy & e-Gov services
- Rights of journalists
- A focus on 'freedom of information and data' ; responsibility in a digital age ; research, not just Political Studies
- The future of the young people concerning economic crisis and political uncertainty
- How does social-dumping affect the development of democracy?
- A focus on electoral systems as well as something about large coalitions in European governments.
- Depoliticisation of the public administration in the institutions in the Balkans as a basis for access to the EU

- The rise of populism ; Energy security ; The clash of civilizations
- The role of the local and regional governments
- Neocolonialism
- Why is representative democracy increasingly failing in some aspects and how can these reasons be addressed? How can equal access to influence decision-making processes be provided to citizens and interested groups?
- Eastern Europe 25 years later: lessons learnt and mistakes made
- Volunteering and democracy
- The Forum has more contents about media with presence of well-known journalists.
- Challenges posed by direct democracy
- The role of international institutions like the EU, CoE, UN in facilitating best practices, standardization, oversight, and funding of civic engagement initiatives.
- Populism and separatism tendencies in Europe and in the world (federalism)
- Add subjects based on the international news - for instance, is democracy about street protest? (Egypt, Thailand, Ukraine), democracy and populism
- Internet politics, Liquid Democracy, grassroots organising, bitcoin
- Political activism & Women
- What role should governments play to enhance democracy?
- Getting out the vote and coping with austerity
- Increasing democratic values in post-soviet countries.
- Relationship between Democracy and Political Parties
- Partisanship created by e-democracy
- Security, Law, Employment - young people in society
- More information about tolerance
- Topics related to stronger links between executive/legislative branch of authorities and civil society
- Anti-war and anti-violence attitude for the future of Europe and the world ; Combatting stereotypes and prejudices as the prerequisite for a world of cooperation and tolerance and a world of true equality for all citizens
- Open data
- One lab could be dedicated to a prospective reflexion on digital.

APPENDIX 2

KEY DATA

Participants

Approximately 1 400 participants from over 100 countries, including 165 speakers took part in the World Forum for Democracy. 33 democracy innovation initiatives were presented in the 21 labs.

The Forum's gender balance was high where a large proportion both among the speakers and participants were women. The speakers at the opening session were 2 men and 2 women. .

This being a forum for emerging voices and democracy innovators, a large number of participants were young (including 40 young people supported by the European Youth Foundation) and were among the most active participants, including in key roles such as lab rapporteurs. The United Nations (UN) youth envoy was also present.

The relative absence of high-level participants may be explained by the fact that the Vilnius Eastern Partnership Summit and Thanksgiving in the United States both coincided with the Forum. .

Press

The Directorate of Communications (DC) received some 150 accreditation requests. In addition to the locally-accredited journalists, over 60 journalists (from all over the world) actively covered the Forum, resulting in around **100 articles**.

Supplements were published by *Le Monde* and *les Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace*, as part of the partnership with the City of Strasbourg.

The DC facilitated up to 40 interviews, for various media, with Council of Europe representatives or participants from the Forum.

Around 50 interviews were organised at the Mediabox, including with participants of the Schools of Political Studies.

15 news items were published on the Forum's web site, including summaries of the main opening and closing speeches.

The DC published an ad in the International New York Times on 14 November (approx. circulation: 226 000), in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on 21 November (430 000) and a digital app ad in the *Economist* from 21 to 27 November (600 000).

A special World Forum Blog was prepared by Society 3.0 online magazine.

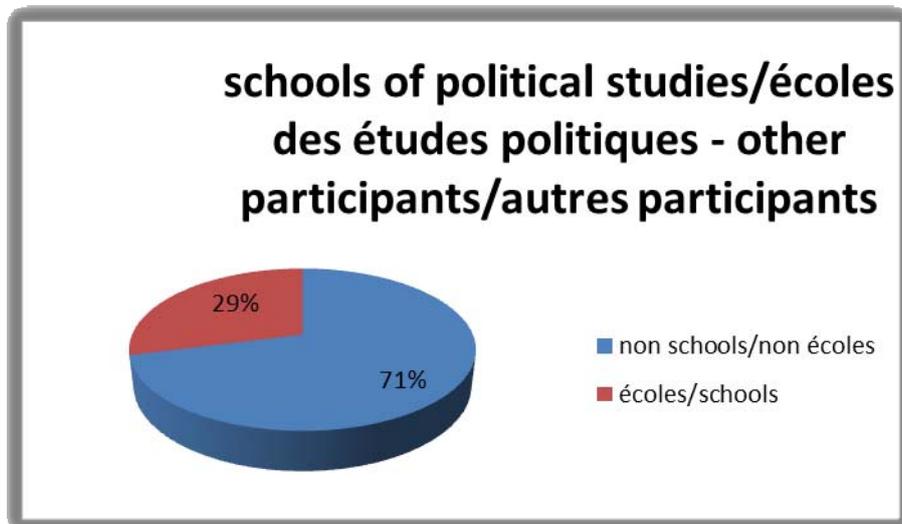
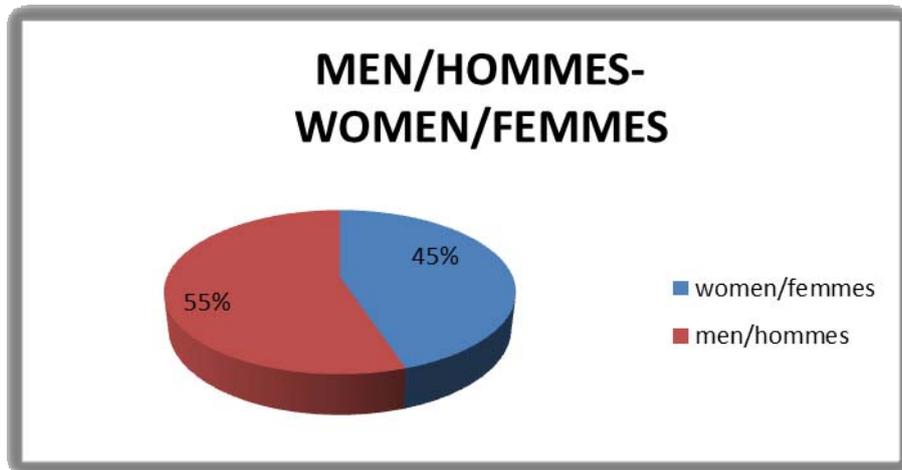
Social Media

The **social media impact** of the forum was important:

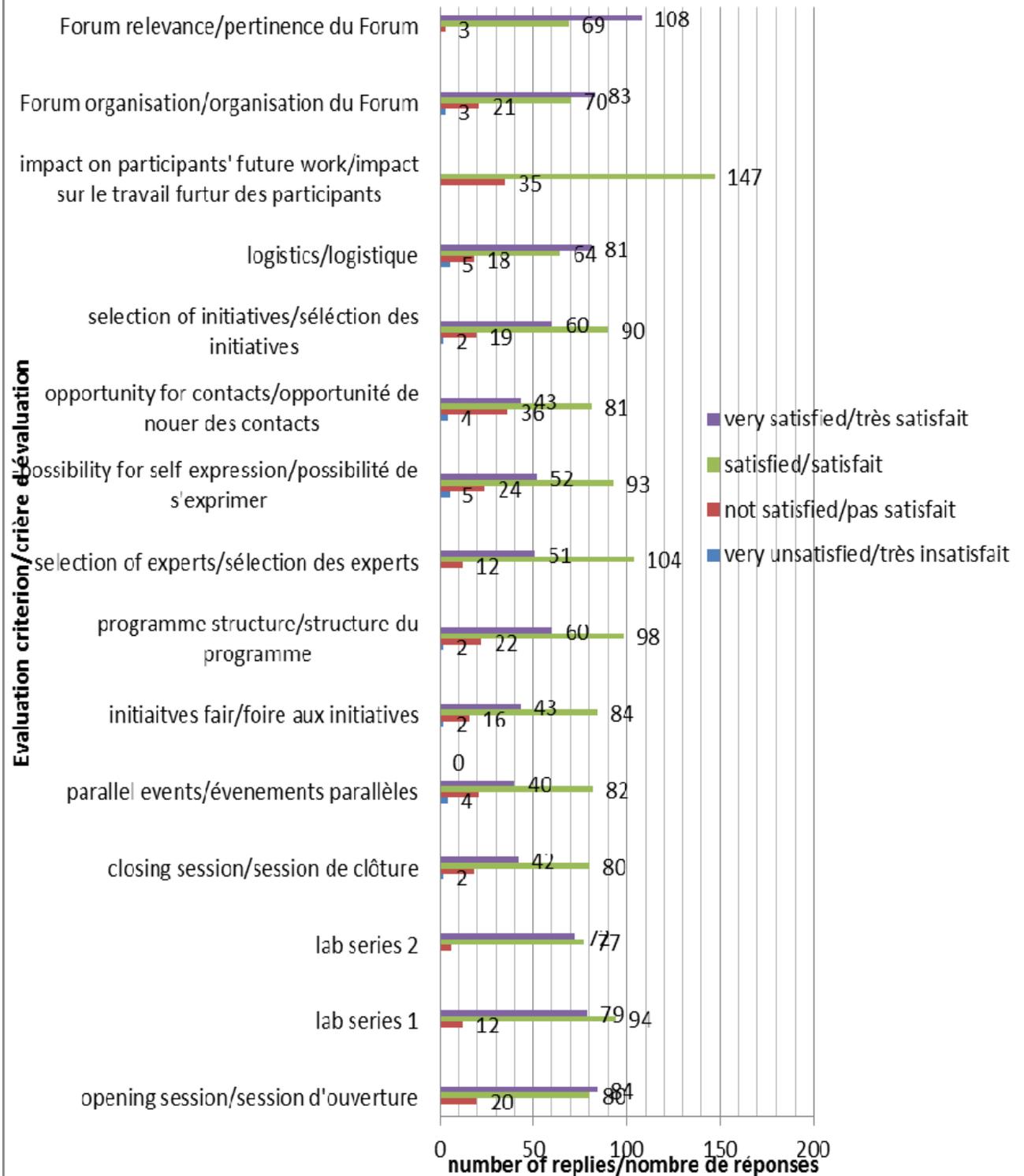
- 608 Contributors used the hashtag #CoE_WFD, 4,210 Tweets were sent using this hashtag, reaching 853,910 Twitter users and generated 7.07 million Timeline Deliveries (7 mln times people saw Forum-related tweets on their twitter account).
- Over 400 people logged in to watch the opening session online and 239 watched the entire 3-hour session.
- Web traffic from 25 November to 1 December: unique visitors - 16 809, total visits - 36 343, actions: 209 972, day with the highest number of visits was Thursday 28 November (10 462).
- Between 27 November and 2 December 2150 people "liked" the Facebook page of the forum. 57 980 people indirectly touched through the publications of their "friends". 4 878 people made an action (publication, "like", posts, forwards).

Replies to online evaluation questionnaire

Total number of replies: 192, average age 32.



Participants' evaluation/évaluation par les participants



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- i 'Democratic' is defined as a country having an average Freedom House ranking of 3 or less. Freedom House uses a 7-point scale where 1 represents the most free and 7 represents the least free. Each country's rankings on 'Political Rights' and 'Civil Liberties' were averaged.
- ii The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
- iii Afrobarometer
- iv World Values Survey
- v Van Biezen, I., Mair, P., & Poguntke, T. (2012). Going, going,... gone? The decline of party membership in contemporary Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, 51(1), 24-56.
- vi Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- vii World Values Survey
- viii World Values Survey
- ix World Values Survey
- x Latinobarometro
- xi Botswana, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe
- xii Afrobarometer
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- xx <http://airqualityegg.com/>
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- xxii <http://www.mysociety.org/>
- xxiii <http://www.governmentontheweb.org/>
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