

The logic of E-Deliberation. Participation beyond civil society.

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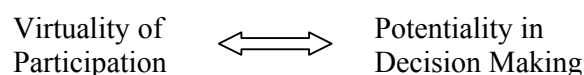
Abstract:

Internet's use spreading was coupled with a utopian ideology model about the liberating role of the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) concerning democracy's stakes. In this context, e-Democracy's issues were set, from the first moment, in relation with the problem of e-Participation. The internet researchers and scholars, and a part of civil society networks, had already made clear that participation is not enough: deliberation is also needed. Therefore, the idea of deliberative democracy was brought out as a demand for further expansion of taking part in the procedure of decision-making.

It is widely accepted that the new social movements and the NGOs as part of civil society could use the Internet for the formation of a new public sphere vis-à-vis the state and the market. Yet civil society agents put emphasis on networks and the empowerment of organised moves and movements and they seem reluctant as to the broadening of ICT beyond its boundaries. No doubt, ICT makes easier for a lust of individual citizens to participate in the new public sphere irrespective of whether they belong to civil society organizations or not.

The debate about e-Governance brought up the discussion in a more realistic basis as far as the social and political use of ICTs is concerned. That happened because e-Democracy, e-Participation, e-Government started to be considered as parts of e-Governance and democratic potential. E-citizens are indeed empowered citizens and the strengthening of civil society because of the Internet's use is self-evident. However, the so-called "expansion of the public sphere" did not lead to the widening of the decision-making processes, which are still run by designated groups.

The logic of e-Deliberation exceeds these narrow limits. In modern, media saturated societies participation in the new public sphere is marked by individualization and cynicism. At any rate, these characteristics discourage classical activation through social associations. Having also in mind state's need for legitimation (as particular reason for organising public deliberations), it can be suggested that e-Deliberation's dimensions could lead to the broadening of participation referring to a remarkable group of people beyond civil society. The dimensions have to do with the two basic facets of e-Deliberation:



Some evidence from Greece will also be presented in order to enlighten these certain aspects of e-Deliberation.

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