

Electronic Participation: Concepts, Technologies and Interdisciplinarity

INTERNATIONAL E-PARTICIPATION ONLINE SEMINAR

On 18 June 2020, Thursday, from 16.00 to 18.00 (Moscow time, GMT+3; 15.00-17.00 CET), the e-Governance Center at ITMO University (St. Petersburg, Russia) organizes an international online seminar *Electronic Participation: Concepts, Technologies and Interdisciplinarity* within the 5th International Conference *Digital Transformation & Global Society (DTGS 2020)*. The goal of the seminar is to bring scholars and experts with different background and from different countries to discuss how we research e-participation, how we implement it as a practice and what we mean by that in the broader scholarship context.

INTRODUCTION FROM THE MODERATORS

The workshop highlights the importance – and popularity – of e-participation in both academic and practitioners' communities as a distinctive area of interdisciplinary research. However, we believe that a more rigorous enquiry is needed to better appreciate how much of interdisciplinarity the concept of e-participation implies (despite some rather minor differences in defining this term).

This introduction has been prepared by the workshop moderators to make the discussion less orthodox. While there are four specific questions (listed below) to answer during the discussion, we, nonetheless, see the goal not only in talking about e-participation from within the field, with an emphasis on the 'e': that is, to exchange view on rather traditional topics, like information provision, consultations, deliberation etc. Yet, we would like to look at e-participation from the outside, i.e. to take a broader interdisciplinary view on e-participation as a scholarly practice that seeks to uncover something about our societies and changes that occur, if any, in civic cultures, attitudes, mediatization, public trust, government strategies etc.

These are just several examples of the inquiry areas we would like to link e-participation to, to test its viability as a political, social, and administrative phenomenon. Is it possible to establish such links at all? Can e-participation be understood from a wider democratic theory perspective? Does e-participation question certain traditional democratic assumptions and manifestations? Does it expand or limit democracy or non-democracy? Has e-participation, with its emphasis on decision-making, the potential to become, in a Schumpeterian spirit, the main 'political method... a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political – legislative and administrative – decisions'.

In this light, we would like to quote Carol Pateman, one of the first thinkers who took a close look at the role of participation in democracy (and a critic of Schumpeter), who wrote the following as back as in 1970 but which :

During the last few years ... the word 'participation' became part of the popular political vocabulary... The widespread use of the term in the mass media has tended to mean that any precise, meaningful content has almost disappeared; 'participation' is used to refer to a wide variety of different situations by different people... the recent upsurges of demands for more participation raises a central question of political theory; the place of 'participation' in a modern, viable theory of democracy' (p.1).

Can we say the same about e-participation as well 50 years later?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS

- 1) Is e-participation a meaningful concept with descriptive and explanatory value, or is it rather a label that should be replaced when the technologies are changing (e.g. to "digital" or "smart" participation)?
- 2) What is the status of e-participation as a discipline? What are the major achievements of e-participation research across domains and countries? Can it become truly interdisciplinary?
- 3) How is the e-participation academic community developing? What role do international conferences and other initiatives play in the collective research identity of these community?

- 4) What role does technology play in e-participation research and practice? What is the impact of various e-participation technologies (e.g. e-petitions, social media) on public governance and civic engagement?

PARTICIPANTS: SPEAKERS, DISCUSSANTS, MODERATORS

- *Dr. Andrey Chugunov*, Director, e-Government Centre, ITMO University, Russia
- *Dr. Noella Edelmann*, Center for E-Governance, Danube University Krems, Austria
- *Yury Kabanov*, HSE-St. Petersburg, ITMO University, Russia (Moderator)
- *Dr. Mariana Lameiras*, UNU-EGOV, Portugal
- *Dr. Morten Meyerhoff Nielsen*, UNU-EGOV, Portugal
- *Dr. Yuri Misnikov*, ITMO University, Russia (Moderator)
- *Dr. Akesandr Riabushko*, Government for Citizens, WeGO Eurasia Regional Office, Ulyanovsk, Russia – Speaker, Discussant
- *Dr. Leonid Smorgunov*, St. Petersburg State University, Russia
- *Dr. Marco Steenbergen*, Department of Political Science, University of Zurich, Switzerland – Discussant

TIMETABLE

What	When
Opening & Welcome by <i>Andrey Chugunov</i>	16.00-16.10
Introduction by <i>Yury Kabanov, Yuri Misnikov</i>	16.10-16.20
Presentations by	16.20-17.15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yury Kabanov</i>. A Scientometric View on E-Participation: E or Participation? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Morten Meyerhoff Nielsen</i>. Digital Inclusion 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Noella Edelmann</i>. E-participation in Austria: from Digitalization to Integration 	
Discussion – all participants	17.15-17.55
Closure by <i>Andrey Chugunov</i>	17.55-18.00