

---

# *e-Participation as a Policy Tool: the Tuscany Case*

---

Dott. Francesco Molinari  
[mail@francescomolinari.it](mailto:mail@francescomolinari.it)

<http://research.altec.gr/ariadne>

---

# Topics List

- *E-Participation: WYSIWIS?*
- *A political goal or a policy tool?*
- The Tuscany case
- Ongoing research: the “hidden power” of Living Labs
- Comments and Discussion

# *E-Participation* – An agreed upon concept?

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-participation>:
  - ICT-supported participation in the **processes** involved in **government** and **governance**
- <http://europa.eu.int/idabc/servlets/Doc?id=24086>
  - the daily possibility to monitor and contribute to **policy** and **decision making** at all levels (local, national, European)
- <http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4201131E.PDF>
  - new opportunities for **Governments** to receive feedback from, and consult with, **individual citizens** directly during policy making, *without the mediation of elected politicians or civil society organisations*

# *E-Participation* – What You See Is What I see?

- <http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/4204011E.PDF>
  - “Technology is the enabler, not the solution”
  - From *e-Participation* to *e-Engagement*: a step forward or a target shift?
  - “Many of the **challenges of the future** are not of a strictly technological nature but are rather concerned with **socio-economic issues**”
- <http://www.ejeg.com/volume-3/vol3-iss1/v3-i1-art4-komito.pdf>
  - “There is little evidence that these technologies will reverse the **decline in long-term civic and political participation** that has been identified as a problem by many governments”

# A political goal?

- [http://www.powerinquiry.org/report/documents/PowertothePeople\\_002.pdf](http://www.powerinquiry.org/report/documents/PowertothePeople_002.pdf)
  - “Disengagement is **not** primarily the fault of politicians – the problem is systemic not personal”
- **Art. 45-3 of the EU Draft Constitution**
  - “**Every** citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union. Decisions shall be taken as openly as possible and as closely as possible to the citizen”
- **Art. 12 of the Porto Alegre Manifesto**
  - “Reform and deeply **democratize** international institutions by making sure human, economic, social and cultural rights prevail, as stipulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...”

# A policy tool?

- The decisions that most affect the lives of people are taken locally, but local Government (“the new Leviathan” according to Clint Bolick) is largely unaccountable
- Accountability is further reduced by the “networked” nature of modern Governments (PPPs, concertation with business associations, NGOs... each with its own stakeholders) – Rhodes et al.
- The “paradox of scale” (Fishkin) can then be reversed: participation is promoted *because* it does not necessarily lead to real influence, while allowing for a richer/more “noisy” debate and (perhaps) a broader fact representation

# The Tuscany Case (1/2)

- the fifth largest region in Italy (22.997 sq Km)
- a total population of 3,547,604 in 2001
- the most populated age categories are the 25 - 44 (1,067,056) and 45 – 65 (945,536) years old with an elderliness ratio of 189,8%, higher than the national level
- a higher standard of living and lower unemployment rate than the Italian average
- marked contrasts in density, development and landscape between inner areas (urban, rural, etc.)

# The Tuscany Case (2/2)

- One of the most active regions in the e-Government field:
  - **Circa 1995-now:** Building up and maintenance of a region-wide telematic infrastructure, RTRT (first example in Italy) linking all the main public entities of Tuscany and a significant representation of private sector (profit and no-profit);
  - **Circa 2001-now:** Conception and implementation of the “e-Toscana” initiative (the Action Plan of Tuscany Regional Administration), including a long list of 50 specific projects for ICT development in the private sector, e-Government and e-Inclusion in the Regional Information Society, with an overall investment of more than 100 million euros;
  - **Ongoing** activities for dissemination of free and open source software;
  - **Circa 2004-now:** the PAAS experience, part of “e-Toscana” initiative.

# PAAS = “Point of free-of-charge, Assisted Access to internet Services”

- a 5,7 million euros investment
- each PAAS is now running at least 12 hours a week (50% of time between 6pm-10pm, at least once on Saturdays or Sundays), under the supervision of an NGO and/or Municipality
- 255 access points active (299 forecasted)
- 306 associations involved (341 registered)
- 180 municipalities involved (192 forecasted)
- 7,692 registered users (15% below 14, 8% up to 18, 21% up to 25, 34% up to 40, 18% up to 65, 5% over)
- 44,356 accesses so far (*end March 2006<sup>1</sup>*)

---

# Moving ahead

- “Technology is the enabler”
  - Need to bridge the digital gap on a larger scale
- More information → more participation
  - An increasingly aware use of the Internet was the result of a regional survey performed before kick-off
- More inclusion → more responsibility
  - Risk of bandwagon? Limited resources...
  - What about contents? Not just for fun...

# Ongoing Research

- Official debates and consultations for a **Regional Draft Law** on citizen's (individual) participation to the political process
  - Long standing “cultural” tradition in Tuscany
  - A “cooperative governance” system already working
  - How far to go beyond simple concertation and democratic “representativeness”?
- Exploration of the “hidden power” of **Living Labs**
  - Not just “Future Centres”, but really “Testbeds”...
  - Participation = Monitoring and evaluation of public policies
  - Strict interactivity with Government entities/representatives

# Implications

- e-Participation as instrumental to higher level social goals (e.g. e-Inclusion, accountability...)
- Need for development of a methodology and toolset for the pan-European deployment of Living Labs in the areas of e-Government, e-Democracy and e-Services
- Unifying attempts: *CoreLabs SSA* ...
- Existing tools: *Demos*<sup>TM</sup> (City of Hamburg)
- Need to focus / clarify the potential contrast between “representative” and “participatory” democracy

---

# Comments and Discussion

- Thanks for your kind attention!

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.5 License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>

