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E-PARTICIPATION AS A TECHNOLOGY OF CITIZENSHIP

Abstract. *The new ICTs, especially e-participation tools and techniques, are promoted by different authorities and policymakers as an invaluable feature of contemporary society and conceived as improving society. This paper addresses e-participation as a governmental technology of citizenship through which the citizen's involvement and collaboration in policymaking and other political processes is called upon and enhanced. E-participation is interpreted as a way of managing human conduct at a collective and individual level that has provided a process for rearranging the exercise of political power.*
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Introduction

Present-day social and political arrangements are deeply influenced by the new information and communications technologies (ICTs) and related tools. The impact new ICTs have on societies, our identities, activities and behaviour has in recent decades been well documented (Bentivegna, 2006; Castells, 2001; Haftor, Mirijamdotter & Bradley, 2011; Yzer & Southwell, 2008). What this body of work shows is that the new ICTs are changing and redefining how we comprehend ourselves, how we organise our lives and our political engagement. This is a relatively continuous process in which the key term is "network" as one of the prime conceptual and practical sites facilitating network forms of societal activities, especially via the Internet (Córdoba-Pachón & Ochoa-Arias, 2010). Especially in liberal democratic systems, the latter is widely perceived as one of the central environments creating novel modes of expressions, political engagement and forms of collaboration.

The socio-political activities of individuals and communities are constantly rearticulated. As Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck (1994) argued, in contemporary society we need to speak about life-politics or sub-politics. Their idea is that the materialisation of politics and political engagement is

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not something limited to central and visible institutionalised actors or formal political participatory practices in which individuals can be involved. Instead, it is related to the observation made by J. Dean, Anderson and Lovink (2006: xx) that "the hybridity, reflexivity, mobility, and performativity characteristic of a networked society and networked community exceed the capacities of previously conceived notions of democracy". As an answer to new societal challenges and phenomena, proponents of the information age strongly believed the potency of new forms of political participation enabled by networked communications, such as e-participation, would enhance political processes, particularly the individual's ability to participate in democratic decision-making. Among others, the engagement of virtual citizens empowered to sign electronic petitions, participate in online discussions and collaborate in online deliberative events was praised by enthusiasts as a sign of novel arrangements that would see fewer of the persistent problems with public dissatisfaction and reduce citizens' wide political passivity (Boggs, 2001) in liberal democratic systems.

Conversely, the dystopians fear that such direct democracy will contribute to nothing more than mob rule and careless policymaking, and that the abundance of information provided by the Internet will add to frequent misinformation that makes sensible political dialogue impossible (Hill & Hughes, 1998: 181). Regardless of such dystopian visions and other critiques (see Breindl, 2010), the new ICTs and especially e-participation tools, services and collaboration activities are promoted by variety of authorities, policymakers and other more or less institutionalised actors as invaluable features of the information-based network society and conceived as improving society (Spirakis, Spiraki & Nikolopoulos, 2010).

This paper addresses e-participation as a specific concept and practical site of governmental strategies and incentives to further the use of information technologies to enhance citizens' involvement and collaboration in policymaking and other political processes. For this purpose, I discuss governmental technologies, including the technology of citizenship (Cruikshank, 1999), as practical ways of managing human conduct at the collective and individual level that provide a process of rearranging the government as a goal in itself (Bevir, 2011; Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1996, 1999; Rose & Miller, 2010; Rose, O'Malley & Valverde, 2006). Cruikshank (1999) calls a technology of citizenship an emergent strategy or technique to transform subjectivity from powerlessness to active citizenship. Technologies of citizenship are not tied solely to the citizens' usage of information technologies but are found in contemporary societies in various forms. However, in this paper I focus on how specific technology of citizenship functions in a realm of novel e-participation forms and tools. The understanding of e-participation as a specific technology of citizenship offers a chance to critically elaborate

it less as an institutionalised form or administrative process than as an amalgam of strategies, tools and techniques to transform citizens' attributes, expectations, attitudes and conduct. Governmental technologies of citizenship embody the instruments of collaboration and representation by which the aspirations, ideas and interest of (online) citizens can collaboratively enter into policy processes.

In the first part of the paper, I outline the theoretical approach and elaborate on contemporary governmental arrangements in liberal democratic systems, including the role and functioning of technologies of citizenship. I proceed with an overview of current relations between the variety of authorities and citizens and the role of the Internet. The latter is commonly regarded as a major technological development transforming how societies and communities operate and how citizens behave in their daily lives. In the third part of the paper, I show the intimate relationship between politics and the realm of technology and the latter's embeddedness in contemporary power relations rendering society and individual citizens governable. On this basis, I also critically assess the role of e-government and e-participation as concepts and concrete strategic aims of governments. In the next section, I discuss e-participation as a technology of citizenship. I particularly focus on e-participation's role as a site for expanding citizens' (political) participation and a form of online collaboration through which citizens' participation is operationalised in ways in which their conduct is strategically governed through the exercise of political power. In the last section of the paper, I present final and concluding remarks.

Governing and Society: Technologies of Citizenship

The concept of technology of citizenship is intimately connected with contemporary forms of power and specific governmental technologies through which governing is accomplished. Michel Foucault introduces a differentiation between power and domination by insisting that "we must distinguish the relationships of power as strategic games between liberties – strategic games that result in the fact that some people try to determine the conduct of others – and the states of domination, which are what we ordinarily call power. And, between the two, between the games of power and the states of domination, you have governmental technologies" (Foucault, 1988: 19). The government in this sense regulates the conduct of various individuals as well as society at large through the more or less rational application of appropriate technical means (Hindess, 1996: 106). As Dean (2010: 270) argues, technologies of government are typically composed "from diverse elements, take part in techno-economic systems, constitute logistical and infrastructural powers, and subsume the moral and political shaping

of conduct by performance criteria". The concept of government shifts the analytical focus from what we usually call legitimate central institutions embodying sovereignty toward the specific practices through which political power is strategically acted (Procacci, 2001: 347). Following Cruickshank, part of government includes technologies of citizenship via which individual subjects are governed and transformed into citizens. These technologies are closely connected and involve various "discourses, programs, and other tactics aimed at making individuals politically active and capable of self-government" (Cruikshank, 1999: 1). Technologies of citizenship always target, directly or indirectly, the self-governing citizens. However, this does not mean individuals are independent of the government and necessarily politically active and, as such, contribute to the political system's functioning within a particular society. Technologies of citizenship can emerge from very diverse rationalities. An example can be found in the functioning of the technologies of citizenship based on the liberal ideas of individualism, where the individual is a key part of broader populations or communities. At the same time, modern governmental practices target the community as an element of power (Ilcan & Basok, 2004) and its objective under which the individual is only one element. This entanglement is a key feature of modern means of governance that target and guide the functioning and conduct of the individual and at the same time that of the whole population.

Modern technologies of citizenship do not operate exclusively within the nation-state framework or are tied solely to the national level. The international and global dimensions of contemporary socio-political processes are relevant and also hold implications for the transformation of citizenships, and thus also for the governmental practices, strategies and technologies that permeate and operate through them. Technologies of citizenship are also present in various socio-political contexts. They operate simultaneously at the local, regional and international level. They are embedded in and derive from heterogeneous discourses of citizenship and are formulated in specific programmes with the aim to activate, mobilise and engage individuals as constituent parts of a given population by implementing strategies, policies, procedures and programmes for the purpose of controlling, regulating, designing and governing a certain community, institution or locality. As Crucikshank (1999: 4) points out, technologies of citizenship operate according to a political rationality for governing people in ways that promote their autonomy, freedom, self-sufficiency and political engagement.

Governance within contemporary socio-political spaces is not tied to and carried out only by political mechanisms or institutions. The point lies precisely elsewhere: modern governmental practices do not arise from specific centres of power, such as specific political organisations or institutions, but are enmeshed and result from (seemingly) voluntary as well as relatively

binding power relationships and the ways through which individuals are governed and govern themselves. We therefore need to consider the whole range of diverse policy tools and mechanisms as well as processes in modern political arrangements if we are to grasp how government operates outside the legal and formal machinery of official policy processes.

Governmental technologies – not only technologies of citizenship but also others – are technologies employed to frame and shape the behaviour and actions of individuals and groups with the aim to manage, control and direct specific socio-political activities, while also limiting and in extreme cases also preventing unwanted processes that would hamper the exercise of power. Nikolas Rose (1999: 52) referred to these governmental technologies as human technologies in that, within these agglomerations, it is human capacities that are to be understood and acted upon by technical means.

According to Rose (1999: 52), "a technology of government, then, is an assemblage of forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscription techniques and so forth, traversed and transected by aspirations to achieve certain outcomes in terms of the conduct of the governed". However, it is important to emphasise that, in the context of technologies of citizenship, the individual's autonomy is not something neglected or even constrained. To the contrary, it is also through the ideas of strengthening the individual's autonomy and independence that capacities and skills to care and act for their own benefit and pursuing their own goals are imagined.

Contemporary socio-political processes, citizenship and ICTs

In contemporary socio-political arrangements, the rise and wide use of digital communication tools and particularly the Internet are helping to transform how societies and communities operate and how individuals act in their daily life. The impact of these new technologies and their use is so powerful and obvious that many authors (Castells, 1998; Dutton, Peltu & Bruce, 1999) believed we are witnessing a completely new societal order in which, among others, changes are occurring in the forms of political participation and rearticulations of citizenship. The Internet and modern ICTs are understood in this context as a new arena of political action, identification and behaviour. Connecting people and communities through new ICTs is seen as enabling the entire population's political participation as well as the co-operation of an ever more individuals in decision-making processes that influence the structure and organisation of the society in which we live. Technological enthusiasts (Webster, 1995) argue that a growing number of people is socialising, working, organising and searching for information via

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the Internet. In their opinion, this facilitates modifications in political participation and builds different forms of citizenship as an important aspect of identity of individuals and populations.

All these processes are inherent to modern societies which, according to Peter Dahlgren (2001), are characterised by the dispersion of cultural frameworks and individualisation. While the dispersion of cultural frameworks relates to the pluralisation and fragmentation of societies through media consumption, tastes, lifestyles etc., individualisation refers to the enhancement of personal autonomy and independence accompanied by a missing sense of belonging to a particular social group or community. In other words, collective experiences are decreasing in importance, while the formation of an individual's identity and expression is growing in importance. These new characteristics of contemporary societies are also transforming practices of citizenship as identity formation and the related socio-political activities of individuals. Representative democracy accompanied by market capitalism became, particularly in the West, the dominant form of socio-economic regulation, yet the capitalist mode of production and representative democracy are in a continuous crisis. Some observers have pinpointed social disintegration and political apathy. Carter and Stokes (1998) argue that we are observing the withdrawal of citizens' participation in formal political processes and withdrawal from participation in decision-making on matters that concern the individual's life. Carl Boggs (2001) named these phenomena the Great Retreat.

In the midst of these major transformations, the Internet and ICTs are frequently regarded as a possible solution to people's current apathy and indifference to participate in formal political processes. It is claimed that the new technological possibilities offer easier and more effective participation in political processes, while the Internet and novel social media provide platforms for citizens' activities and socio-political engagement. Even within the scientific community, techno-optimists regard the new online social networks as a resource offering solutions to the problems of democratic participation (Coleman & Blumler, 2009). On the other hand, there are also so-called techno-pessimists who claim that digital democracy is a myth. However, they simultaneously concur that the Internet and new ICTs are changing the image of participation and actions of individuals and communities. In this context, Castells' (2004) idea of networked individualism is relevant since he claims that what is emerging is a synthesis of the affirmation of an individual-centred culture and the need as well as desire for sharing and co-experiencing. Networked individualism highlights that individuals have greater power in creating networks in which they participate and obtain information. Further, network individualisation implies that an individual at the same time creates but also uses the existing networks while articulating their identity.

Various forms of citizenship are emerging in the new online environments not only on the conceptual level but also as practices. Bellamy (2008) raises an important point when claiming we can conceptualise citizenship as a collection of various components, namely membership, participation, rights and duties. Membership is linked to the political community, while on the other hand individuals' rights and duties are linked to membership of a political community in which the individual has the possibility for political participation in public affairs. It is citizenship as a set of components that has been subjected to transformation with the growing penetration of the Internet and new ICTs in all social spheres and different socio-political environments (Hafner-Fink and Oblak, 2014). As mentioned, the important role of the Internet and new ICTs is stressed when the empowerment of individuals and creation of novel environments for socio-political engagement are in question. Hermes (2006) argues that the Internet does not necessarily create new citizens, although it certainly allows new citizenship practices. These new practices not only mean that citizens are better and more substantially informed, but that the practices are more contingent and appear more discontinuously. At the same time it needs to be stressed that euphoria about technological advance precluded reflection about whether the arrival of a new technological device or system is beneficial to political freedom and democratic governance. The latter is connected to the myth of the end of politics, according to which computer technology transcends politics because it makes power available to everyone (Pajnik, 2005). With this, I focus now on e-government and e-participation as two concepts and practices through which conduct of citizens is operationalised in ways in which it is strategically governed through the exercise of political power.

Government, politics and new ICTs: e-government and e-participation

Before I focus specifically on e-government and e-participation as two interconnected yet distinct concepts, I first proceed with a brief reflection and clarification of the relationship between technology, power and politics. I claim that government is not some centralised institution, but should be understood much broadly as an activity of governing in various ways and simultaneously through various means, including the self-governing of citizens. How, then, should political power be addressed, especially in relation to technology? Similarly, politics and the political should not be understood solely in terms of the activities of political parties, national governments or regional political institutions, but more broadly. Politics is, for example, intimately connected with different forms of identities in so far as identity is not static but dynamic, multidimensional and potentially

contestable. Politics is enmeshed in various situations, including the private life of individual persons. Therefore, I argue that politics is potentiality. That is, in principle, anything can be political. Technology, on the other hand, is widely regarded as something that transcends and is detached from politics. From this view, technology is seen as holding power or offering a set of techniques and practices with which it is possible to evade political processes (Barry, 2001: 7–8). Technological solutions are (mythically) deemed as being based on pure and objective scientific achievements and therefore can provide solutions which transcend political or ideological unnecessary conflicts or differences, thus contributing to optimal solutions be reached that benefit society.

Following the theoretical approach, contrary to the prevailing (mythical) conceptions of technology explained above, I claim that politics and the realm of technology are not in opposition because technology not only plays a formative part in making up what we are as humans and what we perceive to be socio-political institutions, but also forms power relations. As Leibetseder (2011: 17–18) contends: "In a regime of government, social technology exemplifies a support system for an ordered method of the way of government, it allows for the conduct of others and self in a more 'scientific' way. Social technology transforms governing; it uses new techniques to make society governable". Therefore, the technology continually introduces new modes of thought and allows for a specific support system for an ordered method of government which is intimately connected with what is usually called 'electronic government' or 'e-government'. Needless to say, there are many different definitions and meanings of e-government. Most commonly, e-government refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the public administration for the delivery of state services. For example, the OECD defines e-government simply as "the use of ICTs, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government" (OECD, 2003).

Similarly, Fountain (2001) approaches e-government by focusing on how the adoption and incorporation of technology in governmental structures change the organisational functioning of the government. According to Fountain, e-government is closely related to something which can be called a virtual state. This implies that government "is organised increasingly in terms of virtual agencies, cross-agency and public-private networks whose structure and capacity depend on the Internet and web" (Fountain, 2001: 4). Fountain (2001: 6) also underlines that e-government is not simply about government-to-citizen transactions, but also facilitates transactions between government-to-business and government-to-government by means of efficiently coordinating the transactions between different agencies (public, private, local etc.). Thus, from this perspective e-government

can be understood as a reform in public administration in which government services are provided to citizens and other agencies through ICTs rather than via old bureaucratic processes. As we can see, Fountain's approach relies on the perception that technology can be used for various socio-political purposes, that is, to ease governmental or political procedures via the Internet.

Introducing a more historical account of e-government, Paul Henman (2013: 288) states that e-government has co-evolved with technological innovations, which also means its aims and objectives have evolved. In the pre-Internet period, from the mid-twentieth century to the early 1990s, the primary objective of government's use of digital ICTs was to increase various customer services. In the initial development phases of e-government, the idea was to enhance government's responsiveness and flexibility. This gradually changed in the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century when the importance of government getting onto the Internet and making use of a digital network for the electronic transfer of data was more visibly emphasised. Henman (2013: 289) notes that the efficiency objective was again important while equally relevant was the idea to use ICTs to break down traditional governmental processes and consequently to provide a 'whole government', citizen-centred service delivery. The Internet was viewed as essential for enhancing services by making government continuously available. Later on, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, governments explored how social media or Web 2.0 could be harnessed as a strategic option to legitimise power by emphasising government transparency and openness and by inviting citizens to participate in an open government.

The participation of citizens is also a vital strategic government aim when implementing various technological solutions. Accordingly, it is important to consider governments' motivation to adopt different tools and to consider their aims to provide channels for participation in policy-making. Many ICT developments in government have focussed on service delivery or e-government rather than on public participation (Mahrer & Krimmer, 2005). The modernisation agenda that has stimulated e-government development endeavours is widely understood as having an ethos of the citizen as a consumer of services. This so-called consumerist perspective is sometimes seen as being contradictory to the notion of a citizen as an engaged and politically active member of society. This further devalues citizenship as a concept in the sense of neglecting the ideals of public participation (Lukšič, 2014). Still, governments seek to use the Internet and social media technology for activities such as democratic participation and engagement, co-production, in which governments and the public jointly develop, design and deliver government services to improve service quality, delivery

and responsiveness, and crowdsourcing solutions and innovations, seeking innovation through public knowledge and talent to develop innovative solutions to large-scale societal issues (Bertot, Jaeger & Hansen, 2012). In this light, e-participation as a specific e-government field is defined as the use of ICTs (usually web-based technologies) to facilitate engagement and participation in policymaking and decision-making processes. In connection with this, Bertot, Jaeger, Munson and Glaisyer (2010: 56) argue that "it is one thing to solicit participation and feedback but quite another to actually incorporate such public participation into government regulations, legislation, and services. This shift requires processes and mechanisms by which comments, feedback and other forms of participation are incorporated into the government organisations, vetted, and acted upon in some way". As Tait (2012: 226) explains, the term e-participation cannot be applied to all forms of electronic interactions between citizens and government since it must formally and transparently integrate some kind of concrete participation in decision-making processes. When participating, people should feel that their opinions and actions are being taken into consideration and have at least some kind of impact. It is important to note that e-government and, more specifically, e-participation discourses as well as concrete practices are used in such a way that targets individuals as (active) citizens. Moreover, "they involve a hazy narrative that combines the observation that new ICTs make new forms of doing government possible, with normative ideas that such technologies must be used in order to bring to fruition a certain vision of government" (Henman, 2013: 38).

E-participation as a technology of citizenship

Which vision of government does e-participation assume and incite, especially in relation to the individual? In the government context, the opportunities offered by social networking websites and the Internet at large coincide with an ongoing wider government modernisation process. The latter is associated with the increasingly prevailing perception that more complex issues demand greater participation in response to the limitations on the state's capacity to direct society and redistribute resources to the same extent that was the norm in the twentieth century (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). While there are many instances in which non-participatory policymaking and decision-making are legitimate and effective, governmental strategies are a complex and ever-changing process that forges ways of thinking about governing with a myriad of practices that proliferate throughout society, including novel forms of communications and networking. Here, the citizen (as a consumer) is an object of governance and a subject through which governance is achieved. Citizens are being assembled in

various ways as the government project draws upon what can be described as the power to constitute individuals, households, communities and social entrepreneurs as active partners in addressing many of the policy agendas of governments (Morison, 2010). It is in this context that e-participation is proliferated in governance as a more or less structured and coherent set of practices which can contribute: (1) to reaching a wider audience in order to encourage broader participation; and (2) to providing accessible and more understandable information which, in turn, could trigger more informed contributions by citizens in policymaking processes. We now turn to each of these arguments about e-participation identified above, explaining the rationality behind them and deciphering why they can be seen as an instance of technologies of citizenship.

Behind the idea of extending participation via ICTs and web-based tools is a widespread concern that public confidence in political institutions (Norris, 1999) and political participation, evidenced by lower voter turnouts (Blondel, Sinnott & Svensson, 1998), has been in decline. Several socio-political institutions have decided these perceived negative trends are a major issue, and undertaken different initiatives to boost the number of citizens who participate in political matters by stimulating citizens to involve themselves in policymaking processes. In response, different strategies, tools and practices have emerged which allegedly offer the possibility to strengthen participation. The idea is that, by reducing the barriers to political engagement and widening the opportunities for political debate, the Internet can also enhance participation in policymaking in various ways (Eggers, 2005: 144). Macintosh (2004) suggested three types of citizen participation in policymaking: information receiving, consultation and participation. In receiving information, it is governments that produce and deliver information and citizens who receive and use them. In the consultation process, the type of participation is less unidirectional and citizens are allowed to provide feedback on different policy issues. In the last type of participation identified by Macintosh, citizens themselves partly define the process and content of policymaking. This typology of participation is very much in line with Morison's (2010) explication of e-participation governmental strategies, which presupposes that on the most basic level the Government 2.0 idea merely entails "permitting and encouraging government officials and elected representatives to use social media tools such as blogs and wikis to communicate with their constituents and clients". At a second level, e-participation implies the development of tools and networks to encourage citizens' feedback in a process of improving services. On the last, and most comprehensive level, a web-based participatory space is developed where "citizens as users and consumers of government services are engaged in debate with those who provide them" (2010).

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Regardless of the type or level of participation, new technologies are expected to offer possibilities for greater and more effective political engagement. The arguments in favour of enhancing citizen participation via ICTs and web-based tools frequently focus on the benefits of the process itself. On the other hand, there are arguments (J. Dean et al., 2006) claiming there has been little evidence of transformation and the related question of why the new ICTs have had a relatively marginal impact on politics and participation. Most commonly, the identified cause for the lack of participation has often been the so-called digital divide. This means that individuals are excluded from participation because they cannot afford access to the technologies or do not have enough knowledge to use them (Birdsall, 2000; Van Dijk, 2006). Notwithstanding different critiques of this kind, e-participation is still regarded as a major opportunity for citizen online involvement that is intended to produce better and informed decisions, which thereby benefits the rest of society.

The current state of affairs regarding the appearance of ICTs in governing, not only in administrative processes but also in the constitution of a new political form of interaction among social actors and citizens, is connected to the governmental search for new aims once the issue of political passivity as an expression of widespread distrust in today's power relations has been publicly articulated. Here, Foucault's idea is instructive since he claims that "Government becomes concerned with the right manner of disposing things so as to lead [...] to an end which is 'convenient' for each of the things that are governed. This implies a plurality of specific aims" (Foucault, 1991: 95). Since e-participation is to deliver not only a more informed and engaged individual citizen but also benefits the rest of society, it can be regarded as a governmental technology articulating novel objectives targeting "interest at the level of the consciousness of each individual who goes to make up the population, and interest considered as the interest of the population regardless of what particular interest and aspirations may be of the individuals who compose it. This is the new target and the fundamental instrument of the government of the population [...]" (Foucault, 1991: 100). Governing via e-participation is articulated and advanced as a field of governance arrangements in which horizontal interaction among presumptive equal participants is established while citizens-participants are organised in such a manner they represent categories of actors (see Schmitter, 2002). On this basis, e-participation as a technology of citizenship establishes presumably horizontal and networked interactive relations between independent citizens and collective actors who share at least some degree of trust within inclusive participatory institutional arrangements. Such e-participation arrangements "engage us as active and free citizens, as informed and responsible consumers, as members of self-managing communities and

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organisations, as actors in democratising social movements, and as agents capable of taking control of [...]" (M. Dean, 2010: 196) various fields and concerns. The instillation of web-based tools and ICTs pertains to the rearrangement of the relationship between citizens and the state as well as other parts of society, including civil society. It also pertains to the reorganisation of the arrangements of governance as new institutional forms of online administration, management and regulation of various political processes which are arranged so that they become part of the system of governing, of organising the 'conduct of conduct'.

These novel arrangements within governmental e-participation strategies, programmes and practices are particularly evident in the more concrete formulation of the contributions expected from citizens or different publics. As Tait (2012: 231) argues, e-participation initiatives are deemed more effective than offline forms of participation because citizens have access to more information on which to base their decisions and come to an enlightened understanding. These decisions are then used by administrators who can use the information gathered to create better policies. Moreover, web-based technologies allow for large amounts of information to be made available at a relatively insignificant cost compared with distributing information in hard copy. But web-based tools do not only provide a way to share and deliver information to citizens and collective actors. It is argued that the delivered information is the only prerequisite for users' more active role who are becoming content generators, online active and collaborative citizens. As Dahlstedt (2009: 19) reminds, from the Foucauldian perspective the contemporary ideal of active citizenship in democratic liberal societies is staged by means of a series of different techniques. Collaboration can be seen as one of them. This collaborative governance format may be viewed as a technique of governance comprising two closely related elements – on one hand, the creation of online arenas for collaboration and on the other the moulding of the participating citizens and other collective actors, contributing to governance.

Traunmüller (2010: 78) argues that under the name of Web 2.0 a new wave of tools and applications relies on the concept of the user as a producer (and not only consumer) of information which is exploited in governance processes. The creation of collaborative content happens in several ways, including blogs that are online notes open to comment for other users and wikis, knowledge collections built by collaborative editing. Collaboration in policymaking or even decision-making processes is highly relevant and governments seek to argue its value in various ways. Among others, web-based collaboration is deemed to improve the formal cooperation of governmental agency staff by using social media in an informal manner and to improve collaboration results in good practice exchange and knowledge

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collection (Traunmüller, 2010: 79). Another concrete form of online collaboration is deliberation, long seen as a relatively effective form of participation than other participative practices or solutions. Deliberative solutions are seen as leading to decisions considered more legitimate because they are articulated jointly by the participants (Melo & Baiocchi, 2006). Collaboration as e-democratic participation is less about vertically-oriented, government-citizen communication and more about more complex horizontal and multi-directional interactivity (Chadwick, 2006). Tally (1999) critically observed that citizenship in a democracy, including online environments, consists "in the participation of citizens in the ways in which their conduct is governed by the exercise of political power in any system or practice of governance". Governmental technologies of citizenship thus also incorporate the instruments of 'voice' and 'representation' by which the aspirations, ideas and interest of online citizens can enter into the policy processes (see Yeatman, 1994). Collaboration as an instance of e-participation gives citizens an image of their involvement by having a say. This kind of government is deemed democratic simply because it involves a kind of dialogue between those who exercise power and those over whom it is exercised (Tally, 1999). In this processes, a power of freedom (Rose, 1999) is at work precisely because citizens perceive online e-participation collaborative processes as a practically unlimited opportunity to be involved.

However, e-participative collaboration produces different institutional forms for collaboration between various actors which are based on specific rules, limitations and framing. Paraphrasing Palola, Rintala and Savio (2006), we can argue that a collaborative online society needs collaborative citizens. In other words, in the current prevailing networking society collaboration has become an increasingly relevant governmental technique in the production of active citizenship. As e-participation is advanced as a prominent form of governance and feature of policymaking processes, the role and concrete forms of operationalisations of government are rearticulated and transformed. E-participation in the variety of its forms, including collaborative or deliberative online processes, transfigures government so that the contemporary liberal democratic regime is not directed from above, but is being arranged through a variety of supposedly equal partners, including individual citizens, who jointly seek appropriate forms of collaboration to determine the direction of future actions.

Conclusion

As we have shown, it is widely argued that citizens' online participation in government decision-making produces many relevant outcomes. In introducing various strategies and practices, governments' underlying idea

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is that the involvement of citizens in policy processes, their collaboration and search for consensus with a range of stakeholders produces positive benefits leading to positive social and political change. It has been argued here that the new technologies and tools associated with the Internet relating to the e-participation of citizens as well as collectivities have been articulated as part of the development of novel forms of governance. This has emphasised new modes of citizen participation and collaboration with government.

Interpreting e-participation strategies and practices as a technology of citizenship, we argued that e-participative practices, tools and techniques are not simply horizontal and interactive relations between citizens and collective actors having an opportunity to freely express their concerns and propose various solutions. A governmental ordering of online participation may not "always be a space for equal exchange between official and participant views" (Morison, 2010: 575). E-participation serves as a concept and practical platform through which constructions of 'the citizen', 'community' and 'the public' are taking place. The forming of online collaboration and deliberation as concrete modes of e-participation is helping to establish new frameworks for participation while also conditioning the types of behaviour and conduct of the participating actors. Or, as Swyngedouw (2005: 1998–1999) argues: "[...] 'participation' is invariably mediated by 'power' (whether political, economic, gender or cultural) among participating 'holders', between levels of governance/government and between governing institutions [...]". Thus, e-participation as a specific governmental technology of citizenship enmeshes techniques and citizens into integrated networks in which emergent 'conduct of conduct' is an outcome of a series of collaborations and various interactions. Recognising the diversity of specific ICT-based online e-participation structures and processes allows understanding of which kinds of specific reformulations and rearticulations of citizenship are being created via instituting institutional forms for collaboration among various actors which are based on specific rules, limitations and restrictions.

To conclude, one must underline that articulations of power and transformations of governing via governmental technologies such as e-participation are not omnipotent. That is, it is hardly possible to suggest that power is monolithic, operating from one centre and in one direction. E-participation as a site of governing reveals precisely that power operates in a multitude of directions and involves a variety of actors. As such, citizens are not simply passivised objects of power, but are 'active' in their collaboration on the exercise of government, offering them the opportunity to inform and shape the government and challenge it by circulating counter discourses and formulating oppositional interpretations.

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