Chapter 6

E-Government and E-Democracy in the Supranational Arena:
The Enforcing of Transparency and Democratic Legitimacy in the European Union

Eugenio Salvati
University of Pavia, Italy

ABSTRACT

Several scholars have argued about the nature of the democratic (and legitimacy) deficit that affects the European Union (EU) and its political institutions. The creation of a European public sphere and the enhancement of a European "we feeling" among citizens has been considered a fundamental feature to implement the democratic functioning of the EU. In this context of democratic deficit, it is interesting to understand and analyse the role of the e-government in the EU, in order to understand if new technologies could be useful to implement transparency and accountability within the supranational arena and reduce the gap between citizens and institutions. This gap is one of the core elements that are feeding the democratic and legitimacy deficit of the EU. The main task of the chapter is to analyse the actual state of e-government and e-democracy in the EU, and reflect if these tools are reducing the democratic deficit that is effecting EU institutions.

INTRODUCTION

After sixty years from the beginning of the European integration process and in the aftermath of the great economic crisis of 2008, the European Union (EU) is still facing with the big, and almost unsolved, issue of its democratic functioning, the so called democratic deficit (Follesdall & Hix, 2005). This deficit is strictly connected to the way in which the political decisions are taken, the way in which the political actors are accountable for their political choices and by the way in which the European integration is negatively influencing the well-functioning of democracy in some member states (for example the management of the Greek crisis). These political and institutional problems are linked also to the role of the European citizens and the European public opinion and the way in which they can check the democratic functioning of the supranational institutions.

In such a framework it is particularly interesting to understand if the instruments of information and communication technologies (ICT) may play a role in the enforcing of democratic procedure within the EU and to reduce the gap between supranational institutions and citizens. This seems to be a central issue due to the debate on the democratic potential represented by internet (Mosca, 2013) in the nation - state arena.

The lack of confidence in the EU institutional structure, vividly represented by the Brexit referendum, is a systemic crisis that involved a potential de legitimization of the entire supranational political regime. This de legitimization process is also involving national democracies, which are perceived by citizens as hollow in their democratic function by the pervasive role exerted by the EU, which is fostering technocratic and non – competitive political solutions to citizens' problems (Mair 2013). The vote on Brexit and the rising of populist and Eurosceptic parties are warning signs of this diffused dissatisfaction. For these reasons, the reflection about the use of the instruments of e-government means to make a serious analysis about the structural limits of the EU institutional arrangements and of the range of available opportunities to fill the gap represented by the democratic and legitimacy deficit (Beetham & Lord, 1998).

The use of ICT instruments may represent a useful contribution to improve the democratic performances of the EU. Obviously new technologies won't be able to fill the gap between EU institutions and citizens alone, because there are other several elements which need to be strengthened in order to achieve this goal. For example, it will be necessary the enforcement of a real political competition between parties within the EU arena and the improvement of political accountability. The choice to focus this chapter on the analysis of ICT in the EU context it is connected to the opportunity that these technological instruments may produce to reconnect elements

27 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/e-government-and-e-democracy-in-the-supranational-arena/178705

Related Content

Protecting Citizen Privacy in Digital Government
R R. Arnesen (2007). *Encyclopedia of Digital Government (pp. 1358-1363).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/protecting-citizen-privacy-digital-government/11681

A Semantic-Enabled Framework for E-Government Systems Development
Jean Vincent Fonou-Dombeuand Magda Huisman (2014). *Technology Development and Platform Enhancements for Successful Global E-Government Design (pp. 15-31).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-semantic-enabled-framework-for-e-government-systems-development/96687

Method and Tools to Support Stakeholder Engagement in Policy Development: The OCOPOMO Project
Maria Wimmer, Sabrina Scherer, Scott Mossand Melanie Bicking (2012). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 98-119).*
www.irma-international.org/article/method-tools-support-stakeholder-engagement/70078

Exploring Digitally Enabled Service Transformation in the Public Sector: Would Institutional and Structuration Theory Concepts Keep the Research Talking?
Amizan Omar, Ramzi El-Haddadehand Vishanth Weerakkody (2016). *International Journal of Electronic Government Research (pp. 1-14).*
www.irma-international.org/article/exploring-digitally-enabled-service-transformation-in-the-public-sector/176646

A Conceptual Model for the Measurement of E-Government 2.0 Adoption by Developing Countries
Yfantis Vasileios, Abel Usoroand Tseles Dimitrios (2015). *Digital Solutions for Contemporary Democracy and Government (pp. 239-251).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/a-conceptual-model-for-the-measurement-of-e-government-20-adoption-by-developing-countries/129057