

# e-Participation: Systems, Actors, Policy and Research

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## Abstract

Increasing concern focuses on how Americans self-sort—choosing to live, socialize, worship, and more with like-minded people. The ways in which people interact with information, among other dynamics, may perpetuate this self-sorting. Although much discussion describes the damaging nature of the sorting, minimal ideas for reversing it have emerged. An international ambassador concerned with the trend recently became aware of information schools with computer science programs and challenged affiliates with programs thusly combined to find ways to reverse the trend. In this provocative Session of Interaction and Engagement, scholars from CS/IS iSchools will lead participants in meeting that challenge. After viewing the challenge, attendees will use an audience participation system to react to initial ideas presented by the authors. A final large group discussion will focus on how CS/IS and all iSchools can contribute to ongoing dialog about complex social tendencies, like self-sorting.

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## 1 Introduction

The use of ICTs for political participation has long been an interest of researchers. Recent research shows that ICTs are increasingly playing an important role in citizens' participation in politics around the world. In this SIE we would like to focus on understanding contents and context of e-Participation in order to draw possible contribution of iSchools community on the e-participation practice and research.

## 2 Objectives

### 2.1 Addressing the Contributions of iSchools to e-Participation

E-participation has been widely studied by scholars from diverse discipline such as political science, communication, sociology, anthropology, and e-government to name a few. Our first objective is to review the state of interdisciplinary literature on ICTs and e-participation to discuss how iSchools scholars can broaden and deepen studies of emerging phenomenon of e-participation.

### 2.2 Exploring Methodological Innovations

Our second objective is to examine successful ways in adopting identified methodological innovations into the future research at iSchools. From the three dissertation projects, we employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Interviews and qualitative content analysis enable researchers to find users' rich insights into the created content and their intentions behind the observed behaviors. Data mining, machine learning, and social network analysis enables finding novel patterns and characteristics from network and big data. Discussions of assumptions and capability will guide us to systematic ways to incorporate diverse data collection methods and analytical tools into our research and education in order to better respond to the demands from ever-changing ICT worlds.

### 2.3 Collaboratively Drawing the e-Participation Research Agenda

Given the large amount of research overlap with other disciplines (e.g. Political Science and Communications), and the increase in collaborative research; our third objective is to avoid reinventing the wheel by identifying collaboration opportunities and a research agenda.

We expect this SIE to be a platform for iSchool researchers to discuss and expand their study domain and look at the future.

## 3 Relevance

Interest in e-participation within the iSchools community has increased over the last few years. The 2008 iConference proceedings have 0% papers on this subject, but in the 2015 iConference, this number

climbed to 8%. We expect that this SIE session will bring iSchool scholars' attention to their partnership with the society in "Political Participation and ICTs." We also expect the resulting "Workshop Report and Prospective Research Agenda" to be useful for current and future iSchools PhD students and faculty.

#### 4 Intended Audience

Multidisciplinary scholars and researchers interested in the intersection of ICTs, politics, political participation, political organizations, and their respective research methodologies.

#### 5 Activity Plan

This event is planned to take place in five parts: two 90-minute sessions, pre, mid, and post-conference activities.

##### 5.1 Pre-conference Activities

Several months before the iConference we will send a call for participation through the iConference and ASIS&T (SIG-III and SIG-IEP) listservs, and Twitter. Since we expect to have a wide variety of research topics on e-participation with diverse perspectives, we will ask interested colleagues to submit a brief position paper (300-500 words in length). This way, we can recruit participants and organize in advance the teams, discussion topics for sessions and the mid-conference activities. We will also assign team leaders<sup>1</sup> who will serve as team moderators during sessions and designated "talk-spots" during our pre and mid-conference activities. Moreover, we plan to take advantage of our ASIST<sup>2</sup> panel and ALISE<sup>3</sup> attendance to advertise our SIE. We understand there are colleagues and potential constituents already interested in our SIE within these communities.

Several weeks before the iConference we will have an initial virtual meeting, via Skype, with team leaders to finalize plans for Session I, Session II, and conference activities. We will also start the outline of our workshop report.

##### 5.2 Session I

Three activities will take place during the first session. The first activity will be a multimedia summary presentation of recent research across disciplines. The second activity will be a discussion of the relevance and contribution of Information Studies to the research on e-participation. The topics to discuss will include<sup>4</sup>:

- a) Sociotechnical Perspectives to e-Participation
- b) Social side of social participation (Behavior of actors who engage in e-Participation)
- c) Policy (As constraint, objective, guide, or control of Online Political Participation).
- d) Research Methods of e-Participation

The third activity will be assigning participants to teams. Team members will be instructed to continue their discussions and brainstorming through the conference. During the Session II, teams will present their ideas for a research agenda within these four broad categories.

##### 5.3 Mid-Conference Activities

After Session I there will be an ongoing discussion, both face-to-face amongst team members and via Twitter. We will do this by assigning our team leaders to designated "talk-spots" in the conference hallways. We will also encourage online discussion via Twitter by linking the official iConference hashtag (#iConference) and our SIE hashtags: #eParticipation and #ICTs. We chose Twitter, as it is one of the most widely used online discussion tools during conferences. This is meant to keep the momentum, foster ideas, promote discussion and bolster teams' brainstorming. We anticipate participants will be inspired by the other iConference papers and poster presentations. It is also intended to raise awareness about our SIE and motivate people to attend Session II.

##### 5.4 Session II

Session II will have two parts. In part one, teams will present their proposed research agendas to all attendees. We anticipate having a minimum of 4 teams and a maximum of six, so each team will have 5-

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<sup>1</sup> We anticipate 5-10 team leaders.

<sup>2</sup> Hagen, et al. (2015) Emerging Trends in the Use and Adoption of E-participation Around the World. ASIS&T Annual Meeting, St. Louis Missouri. Nov 6-10, 2015

<sup>3</sup> January 5-8, 2016

<sup>4</sup> See section 7 of this document for a sample of anticipated discussion questions.

10 minutes to present. We also anticipate participants will be very creative and will present their contributions a wide array of formats.

In part two, we will draft collectively the “Workshop Report and Prospective Research Agenda on e-Participation and ICTs for iSchools Scholars” (An outline of the draft will be available via Google Docs in advance, teams will be able to contribute to it from Day 1).

### 5.5 Post-Conference Activities

There will be follow-up sessions where we will finalize the workshop report, plan follow-up activities proposed by participants. We hope to continue collaborating with participants and plan future iConference participation.

## 6 Deliverables

There will be several products from this activity:

- A workshop report and research agenda that will be made available to the whole community via iConference proceedings and/or academic social media (Academia.edu, Mendeley and ResearchGate)
- A public and easily retrievable Twitter discussion (by use of iConference and SSI hashtags) about research on ICTs and political participation
- Multimedia presentations from participating teams that will also be made publically available through academic social media.

## 7 Sample of Discussion Questions

These are some examples of the questions and topics that will be discussed throughout the SIE activities:

### 7.1 Sociotechnical Perspectives to e-Participation

- a) Does quality of information communicated matter for e-participation?
- b) Can information organization and presentation bring influence on e-participation? Why and How?
- c) What is the importance of ICT infrastructure and design?

### 7.2 Social side of e-participation (behavior of actors, agents, users)

- a) What is the importance of collective & collaborative behaviors (information behaviors such as seeking, sharing, exchanging, avoiding of information/opinion and etc.)
- b) The impact of various user groups on political communication and participation (e.g., opinion leaders, activists, lay people, etc.)

### 7.3 Policy (as constraint, objective, guide, or control)

- a) The importance of ICT Policy (i.e., Honduras, South Korea, US).
- b) The vulnerability of ICT infrastructure/Policy (i.e., Honduras, South Korea, US)

### 7.4 Research Methods of e-Participation

- c) The assumptions, strength, and limits of each method (both quantitative and qualitative)
- d) The importance of information organization, analysis, and visualization
- e) Increasing demands to adopt multiple methods (techniques/tools) to the future research