English Abstracts

E-democracy and Eu-democracy: a Meditated Experiment
By Philippe C. Schmitter

Moving from the assumption that currently neither e-democracy nor Eu-democracy exists, this paper provides a series of careful ideas and actual steps aimed to implement such democratic perspectives. Strong advocate of Ict's powerful force in shaping the practices (and, eventually, the values) of democracy in Europe at any level, the author outlines some conjunctures of trends and events that, although yet unforeseeable, could compel the Eu actors to apply Ict in a systematic and comprehensive fashion to the task of democratizing itself. This widespread use of Ict could allow the Eu to overcome chronical problems, such as the growing distance between citizens and institutions (both at European and local levels), and the extreme diversity of cultures and life-worlds (even more with the current expansion to 27 member states). It will also help the Eu to extert itself as an innovative and super-partes political structure, moving toward the creation of a distinctive and significant "European public sphere". The essay then proceeds to outline in detail only some of the many Ict applications (voting, referendum, vouchers and contacts all pursued via electronic means), underlining the great level of potentiality and innovations inherent to all these features. In conclusion, even if E-democracy will not be a panacea for Eu-democracy, nevertheless this effort aimed to re-invent itself through the Ict will be helpful in filling up its much decried (but rarely proven) "democracy deficit".

Of Windows, Triangles and Circles: the Political Economy in the Discourse of Electronic Democracy
By Wainer Lusoli

New media offer unprecedented opportunities of political engagement to a wide range of actors. I argue here that the study of this political potential has been framed, since the '70s, as an "electronic democracy" discourse. The discourse is rhetorical in nature and builds on political, structural and semantic dynamics unfolding in the cultural domain, promoted by left-wing political entrepreneurs in strange alliance with the forces of high-tech capitalism, mainly amongst academic quiescence. Using material from the Us, the Uk and other countries this article offers three explanations, or theorems, of the coalescence of the discourse. First, a "policy window" theorem interprets the emergence of the discourse as the encounter of demand and offer of radical change and democratisation in the political

marketplaces of idea – the city council, the western polity, the supra-national sphere. Second, a "triangle" theorem takes into account the role of third interested poles – oppositions and the new media industry – in the consolidation of the discourse. Finally, a "semantics" theorem explains the resilience of the e-democracy discourse to critical and scholarly understanding. A critique of the debate concludes the article.

The Digital Revolution and the European Constitutionalisation Processes: E-Democracy Between Ideology and Institutional Practices
By Francesco Amoretti

Europe is currently going through a distinctive period in constituent terms. This is interpreted according to categories and perspectives modelled on the political and institutional experiences of the past: People, Sovereignty, Nation, Democratic legitimacy.

It is difficult to imagine what institutional frameworks will emerge within the European Union. However it is this very complexity that has led, compared with the past, to considering with greater interest the process of creating an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe: by a shift in emphasis from integration, perceived as a rational by-product of economic prosperity and legal harmonisation, to concerns with integration as cultural process, and 'culture' as a political instrument for furthering that construction process.

The initiatives and policies that enhance common roots, that create new symbols and cement communicative networks between institutions and citizens are without doubt important for the creation of a common public sphere, capable of overcoming the differences within Europe.

Less attention has been paid to policies likely to become equally or even more fundamental: changes in the public sphere tied to the introduction and diffusion of Icts. These are issues which have acquired more and more importance on the political agenda of the Ue to the extent that they have taken on a strategic importance in political terms -*eEuropa*.

The aim of this paper is to analyze *e-democracy* at the European level, with reference to *visions* and *action plans*.

Weblogs and Processes of Formation of Public Opinion
By Rosanna De Rosa

The article explores the main characteristics of the blogs and the reasons that make them so interesting for the social sciences. The author focuses on their possibility both to influence the political action and to determine the constitution of a new public sphere. Nevertheless, the limits of the system are as many as the advantages. It is necessary to underline these constraints, as they contribute to establish both the main theoretical framework of the phenomenon and the conditions of its institutionalization. The answer to the main question of the article – can the blogosphere constitute a new public sphere? – can't be but necessarily hypothetical.

The e-democracy project between modernisation and new dependency
By Fortunato Musella

In the last years many reports, produced by both governments and international institutions, are focused on electronic democracy, the new frontier for transparency and citizen participation in government activities. Yet, despite of the great entity of investments, the implementations of digital policies have not led to expected outcomes. This essays analyzes the ideology of electronic democracy by answering to this following critical questions: why so much attention is on e-democracy? How is it studied? Can we identify a common ideological background in works and reports devoted to this theme?
Beyond rhetoric and promises, this articles discusses the nature of e-democracy's project by comparing contributes from different countries. It shows risks of digital divide as well as attempts to western citinzenship, keeping in mind that new forms of dependency should be hidden in the dream of digital polis.

The *World Summit on the Information Society*: exercises of *e-governance* between "place spaces" and "flux spaces"
By Claudia Padovani and Bart Cammaerts

Governance is increasingly becoming a contested notion, whereby the different meanings of the concept make it intangible, elusive. Nevertheless this is a central topic to better understand developments related to participation and citizenship in contemporary societies; thus defining the broader context in which to locate the use of information and communication technologies in support of participatory practices.
Some refer to governance as being regulation, others relate it to codes of good conduct by business actors and public institutions as in good governance and other authors place the notion of governance central in democratising global and regional politics, through participatory mechanisms allowing non-state actors to take part in policy processes. One of the recent modalities to put this approach in practice has come to be known as "multi-stakeholder approach" (Msa).
In this article we look at the recent experience of the World Summit on the Information Society (Wsis), in which the Msa has been formally promoted and partly realized, as a case study to identify potentialities and shortcomings of an approach which could be seen as a way to re-think the way in which citizenship is conceived, especially in the global context. Having the Wsis focused specifically on information and communication technologies (Icts) and their impact in different areas of human activity, we also pose a special attention on how these technologies have been applied to promote stakeholders' participation in the process.
This reflection aims at assessing the interplay between governance and e-governance in global politics, starting from a reconstruction of the context within which the idea of multi-stakeholder governance has been developed and discussing the relation between such approach and the use of information technologies. We then proceed analysing how this approach has been realized in the Wsis process; to conclude with critical remarks on potentialities and limits of participatory practices in a global context.

Challenges and Opportunities of e-democratization in East Europe
By Mara Morini

By focusing on Internet policy in Russia and Ukraine, this article addresses the potential and the impact of the Internet on increasing freedom in authoritarian regimes. Traditonally, authoritarian governments have responded to the It revolution by censoring sources of free information. The evidence of the case-studies shows that the It revolution cannot automatically lead to more freedom and better democracy, but they also show the danger of authoritarian governments learning how to appropriate the benefits of the Internet in order to increase their control over the public information space.