

## **ONLINE CONSULTATION AND PUBLIC POLICY MAKING**

This group will evaluate the policy and other social impacts of online citizen consultation initiatives aimed at influencing actual government decision making, and will examine how the design of these types of initiatives is affected by cultural, social, legal, and institutional contexts.

### ***Co-chairs:***

**Peter Shane, Moritz College of Law, Ohio State University**

**Stephen Coleman, University of Leeds, UK.**

### **Project Summary**

The International Working Group on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making is focusing on two main research questions (a) how to evaluate the policy and other social impacts of online citizen consultation initiatives aimed at influencing actual government decision making, and (b) how the optimal design of such initiatives is affected by cultural, social, legal, and institutional context.

The group's most ambitious aim will be to produce a book on identifying and measuring successful e-consultations, and describing how the approach to process design and evaluation should be tailored to the legal, political, and cultural contexts within which online consultation is occurring. Research reports that will form the basis of the book's chapters are expected to emanate from four sub-groups that will consider, respectively, the impact of online consultation on government agencies and policy makers, the impacts of online consultations on public participants and civil society organizations, the relationship between the design of consultation and the kinds of impacts identified, and the ways in which legal, political and institutional context shape prospects for success.

The inquiry will be multidisciplinary and comparative. Team members are based in Australia, England, France, Israel, Italy, Slovenia, and the United States, but various team members are conducting research or participating in significant relevant professional networks in Canada, China, the European Union, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Libya, and Morocco, as well. The work will be conducted through five face-to-face meetings, along with the support of online meetings, both asynchronously and in real time, and a Web presence to support this (and other's) research on e-consultation.

In addition, a conference will be held where members of the working group will present papers based on their individual research projects. Ohio State will fund the international participants' travel and expenses, and papers will

be published in a special issue of *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*.

### **May 2009 Meeting, Paris, France**

The International Working Group on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making held its fifth and final meeting in April 2009 in Paris. Hosted by group member Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, the group devoted its working meeting to review and discussion of draft chapters for its planned edited volume, *Connecting Democracy: Online Consultation and the Future of Democratic Discourse*.

The public outreach portion of the meeting was a full-day international symposium on *Electronic Democracy: Towards New Forms of Governance? Issues and Experiences*. The symposium, hosted by Universite de Technologie de Compiengne-Costech and Sciences Po Paris-CEVIPOF included speakers, panels, and discussions on e-democracy and e-consultation in Europe. Members attending included co-chairs Peter Shane and Stephen Coleman, plus members, Sungsoo Hwang, David Lazer, Jeffrey Lubers, Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, Alicia Shatteman, Scott Wright, and Andy Chadwick.

### **November 2008 Meeting, Washington, DC**



Working group co-chair Stephen Coleman, University of Leeds, UK, participating in meeting in Washington, D.C.

The **International Working Group on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making** held its fourth meeting on November 7-8 in Washington, D.C. The group continues to focus on its joint authorship of a projected volume, *Connecting Democracy: Online Consultation and the Future of Democratic Discourse*. Group members spent most of meeting presenting draft chapters to one another and reviewing what they believe is likely to be the final organization of the book. Group co-chairs Peter Shane of the Ohio State University and Stephen Coleman of the University of Leeds hope to contract with a publisher in early 2009 and to have the volume completely

edited by late summer. A fifth meeting of the group is planned for April 23-24, 2009 in Paris, France both to confirm the book's contents and to share research ideas with representatives of the European Demo-Net project.

In addition to their project discussions, group members spent ninety minutes with former FCC chairman, Reed E. Hundt, who is also a co-chair of the Obama-Biden transition team, conducting a review for the new Administration of the federal government's economics and international trade agencies. Mr. Hundt and the working group discussed the role of the Internet in the recently concluded presidential campaign.

Members attending this past session were Stephen Coleman and Peter Shane (co-chairs), Joachim Åstrom, Sungsoo Hwang, David Lazer, Jeffrey Lubbers, Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, Vincent Price, Alicia Schatteman, Peter Strauss, and Scott Wright. The group also includes Steven Balla, Patrizia Bertini, Andrew Chadwick, Åke Grönlund, Oren Perez, and Polona Pićman-Stefančić. Natalie Helbig, from the Center for technology in Government also attended the Washington meeting.

### **March 2008 Meeting, Ohio State University**



David Lazer (at podium), director of the program on Networked Governance and associate professor of public policy at Harvard University, critiques a paper by Laurence Monnoyer-Smith at the International Conference on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making: Democracy, Identity, and New Media, held March 14, 2008, at the Barrister Club.

The group hosted a conference at Ohio State University to share some of their preliminary research into aspects of electronic democracy. At the conference, eight members of the group presented draft papers on a variety of topics connected to the emergence of e-democracy.

In addition to the papers presented at the conference, the group aims to produce a jointly authored book by 2010, under the working title, *Connecting Democracy: Comparative Perspectives on Online Consultation and the Future of Democratic Discourse*.

The papers presented at the conference included:

- Andrew Chadwick, head of the Department of Politics and International Relations and founding director of the New Political Communication Unit at Royal Holloway, University of London, discussed the democratic possibilities entailed in the range of online social practices typically now labeled “Web 2.0.”
- Scott Wright, lecturer in New Media and Society at the University of East Anglia, discussed political campaigning and counselors’ blogs in the UK.
- Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, associate professor of Communication Sciences at the University of Technology at Compiègne, France, spoke on, *Technology and Inclusion : Framing Online Public Debate to Enlarge Participation*.
- Oren Perez, senior lecturer in the Faculty of Law at Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan-Israel, discussed technological prospects for addressing issues of information overload that bedevil the theory and practice of deliberative democracy.
- Steven Balla, associate professor of Political Science, Public Policy and Public Administration, and International Affairs and research associate at the George Washington Institute of Public Policy, and University of Pittsburgh doctoral candidate Sungsoo Hwang, presented two papers dealing with the deployment and use of municipal neighborhood information systems.
- Alicia Schatteman, doctoral student at Rutgers University presented a paper on the Ontario citizen assembly process.
- Kerrie Oakes, doctoral student at Griffiths University, Queensland, Australia presented a paper on the impact of e-democracy practices on the civil service in Australia.
- The conference also featured a keynote talk by Tim Erickson, local issues forum director for [e-democracy.org](http://e-democracy.org), who discussed *Building Democracy Through Local Issues Forums*.

All the presentations are archived and available [online](#). Papers from the conference will be published late in 2008 in a special issue of *I/S: A Journal of Law and Policy for the Information Society*, which is a joint venture of Ohio State and Carnegie Mellon Universities.

Additional financial support for the conference came from the Mershon Center for International Security Studies and the Moritz College of Law, both at Ohio State.

## November 2007 Meeting, University at Leeds, UK



Attendees at the second meeting of the International Working Group on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making.

The International Working Group (IWG) on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making assembled for its second face-to-face meeting November 30 - December 1, 2007 at the University of Leeds. The group devoted its first morning discussion to a series of presentations on the state of e-Participation research in Europe, with special reference to the work of **DEMO-Net**.

During the afternoon, the IWG assembled both in subgroups and in plenary session to refine its ideas for a forthcoming jointly authored volume on the phenomenon of online consultation and its relationship to the overall landscape of democratic discourse. Members had prepared for the meeting by creating short summaries of the chapters for which they have primary responsibility, documents that, in turn, provided the basis for the group's more focused discussion on the overall structure and argument of the book. The final morning session was devoted to a mini-seminar aimed at situating the group's own agenda against the backdrop of ongoing research programs and theoretical debates in political communications.

## April 2007 Meeting, Boston, MA



Members of the International Working Group on Online Consultation and Public Policy Making at their first meeting.

The group devoted its inaugural meeting to a mini-symposium during which all members made presentations regarding their current research agendas, as well as to a deliberative session to formulate a working plan for its three-year research effort, "(R)E-Connecting Democracy." "(R)E-Connecting Democracy" will produce a multi-authored book on (a) how to evaluate the policy and other social impacts of online citizen consultation initiatives aimed at influencing actual government decision making, and (b) how the optimal design of such initiatives is affected by cultural, social, legal, and institutional context.