

Electronic Voting and Democracy

Also by Norbert Kersting

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Electronic Voting and Democracy

A Comparative Analysis

Edited by

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Preface

In 2001, the first German online election took place during the direct election for the head of county executive. During research on this pilot project it became quite clear that there is a lack of both theoretical reflection and empirical data on the subject. This situation sparked the idea to initiate a team of political scientists concerned with Internet voting and e-democracy in order to build a research agenda and to foster comparative research.

The Internet Voting Workshop, which took place in June 2002, provided an overview of the pilot projects and strategies regarding Internet voting in various local and national elections. The workshop focused primarily on social, political and legal aspects of Internet voting and less on technical matters. Survey data as well as the results of qualitative research in focus groups were presented. The workshop was financed by the Fritz-Thyssen foundation, which also financed empirical research on the Internet election project in Marburg. The workshop was organized by the Research Committee 05 (Comparative Studies on Local Government and Politics) of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) and the Institute of Political Science at Philipps University in Marburg.

At times, the implementation of online voting seems to be a horse-race. Which country will be the first to implement this instrument? For some years now, a number of countries have developed expertise in order to investigate Internet voting, and a number of book projects underway, mostly national case studies, came to our knowledge during the planning of the workshop. The workshop aimed to bring together prominent experts working in this field, including representatives of groups from national administrations (mostly the ministry of the interior). Participants came from many countries, while colleagues who were unable to attend were kept informed about its progress and its results.

The lively discussions in the workshop highlighted variations with regard to national administrative and legal settings as well as political-cultural diversity. One of the discoveries of the workshop was how such diversity may lead to context-bound and nationally specific paths towards e-democracy. Nevertheless, some generalizations also emerged.

We would like to thank all participants involved. Together with the helping hands of Kym Turner, David Bosold and Anna Maria Mischkowsky the workshop was made into a wonderful and stimulating event, and we hope that there will be further fruitful cooperation. Interested colleagues are warmly welcome to join us in further efforts in this field.

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