

**1. Great Britain's e-democracy is one of the most developed ones in Europe. You work mostly on the local level. Why? Why is in your opinion e-democracy more easily implemented in democratic processes on the local, rather than national level?**

Localities matter because it is where most people experience public services. People have more opportunity to engage at the local level and can see the effects of their influence more directly. Local democracy, therefore, is not only fundamental to wider democratic practice but is, arguably, more important to individuals than many of the institutions of national government.

My interest in e-democracy stems from my interest in local democracy and participation more generally. Local governments have more opportunity to experiment with e-democracy because they are closer to the people and understand their populations better. They also have a safety net from national governments should initiatives have negative consequences.

**2. Some politicians see the implementation of e-democracy as a threat, at least that's the case in Slovenia. It appears you have managed to overcome that in Great Britain. What made this shift possible?**

It is also the case in Britain that some politicians see e-democracy as a threat, especially where it enables non-elected professionals to speak directly to the public in place of elected politicians. However, many others recognise the problems that Britain faces in engaging citizens and hope that new technologies will provide the catalyst for enhancing participation. e-Democracy initiatives still tend to be led by bureaucrats rather than politicians but politicians in many areas have been brought into the process and support experiments in the hope that they will deliver better democracy.

**3. E-election represents the culmination of e-democracy. In Estonia we saw a successful realization of e-election. Even though the most attention is paid to technological aspects, it seems that the biggest resistance to e-election comes from the voters themselves. Is it fair to expect e-election to be an everyday occurrence in the future?**

The biggest threat to e-voting, in my opinion, is the extent to which citizens will ever trust the outcome of an e-election. Those implementing e-voting, therefore, must not only ensure that elections are free and fair but must also demonstrate it - at the moment, the precautionary principle seems to hold for e-voting in so far as the burden of proof rests with those who promote it. However, having said that, it seems inevitable that most countries will have e-voting in the not too distant future. As citizens become more and more used to undertaking all other transactions electronically so they will become more demanding of governments to e-enable democracy.

**4. The power of political blogs is growing, whether they are written by politicians or by ordinary people. Do you think political blogs are a tool of manipulation and thus a part of a political campaigns, or do they establish long-term two-way communication?**

I do not believe that the technology of blogs has any inevitable consequences: their relevance will be determined by the way in which they are used by different individuals and groups. It seems likely that some, such as that of Etienne Chouard (the French 'non' campaigner) are destined to become very popular because they 'scratch where people are itching'. However, others are destined never to be read by anyone other than the author. As a tool for political campaigning, blogging does have great potential, but their relevance will be defined by the social and political context in which they are developing. This means that there will be great variation in the way they are used.

**5. People are uninterested and indifferent about politics. Few are educated to come up with specific and credible solutions to all the problems we encounter. However democracy, and also e-democracy, advocates equality of opinion. In Ancient Greece, only male Athens citizens of age could vote. E-democracy enables the participation and sharing of opinions to a much bigger part of the population than any other form of democracy. Some critics still claim e-democracy is elitist (digital divide, technology, education...). Is it reasonable to presume the ideal citizen and thus fight against the elitism of e-democracy? Is the ideal citizen even possible?**

One of the major faults of many e-democracy promoters is that they assume citizens want more opportunities for engagement: there is an assumption of the 'ideal citizen' who engages without prejudice and on every issue. This assumption is unrealistic and unfair. It is not reasonable to expect citizens to participate on every issue. Instead, we should be building democratic institutions which protect political equality while, at the same time, minimising the costs of engagement. The tools of e-democracy provide one of the best hopes for such institutions, because they can facilitate participation on terms that suit citizens. However, governments need also to be sensitive to issues of the digital divide. That is why, in the UK, policy makers always talk about democracy as operating through many different channels, both online and offline, rather than simply e-democracy.