

# Interaction between States and Citizens in the Age of the Internet: “e-Government” in the United States, Britain, and the European Union

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*We examine the origins of the recent shift towards “e-government” in three cases: the United States, Britain, and the European Union. We set out three heuristic models of interaction between states and citizens that might underpin the practice of “e-government.” Focusing on U.S., British, and European Union initiatives, we undertake a comparative analysis of the evolution of key policy statements on e-government reform in national (and supranational) government. We conclude that the democratic potential of the Internet has been marginalized as a result of the ways in which government use of such technology has been framed since the early 1990s. An executive-driven, “managerial” model of interaction has assumed dominance at the expense of “consultative” and “participatory” possibilities.*

The trouble with the zealots of technology as an instrument of democratic liberation is not their understanding of technology but their grasp of democracy (Barber, 224).

In the developed world, the Internet is now ubiquitous; government use of it is fast becoming so. For such countries, the issue is no longer whether government is online, but in what form and with what consequences. Many states have recently embarked upon a wave of “e-government” initiatives that make use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). In this article we examine how the view that ICTs are capable of reshaping governance has been integrated into policy pronouncements on e-government and its role in the “renewal” of democracy by the American and British governments and the European Commission.

We argue that there are three basic models of interaction between states and citizens that underpin the practice of “e-government.” Each is an ideal type in the Weberian sense—an heuristic tool for identifying and classifying the main features of a set of phenomena, with a view to rendering complex processes more intelligible and comparable in a way that aids further empirical research (Weber). Our three models are not mirror images of reality. Rather, they represent the distinctive characteristics of

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each model of interaction. Equally, while in any specific case one of the three models is likely to be the dominant form of interaction, all three may intersect and overlap. First, we sketch out the models of interaction, which we term “managerial,” “consultative” and “participatory.” Secondly, using evidence from the United States, Britain, and the European Union, we undertake a comparative analysis of key policy statements on the future role of ICTs in national government. We conclude that the democratic possibilities of the Internet are likely to be marginalized as a “managerial” model of interaction becomes dominant.

The principal features of e-government managerialism can be summarized as follows: a concern with the “efficient” delivery of government information to citizens and other groups of “users”; the use of ICTs to improve flows of information within and around government; a recognition of the importance of “service delivery” to “customers”; the view that speeding up information provision is, *by itself*, “opening up” government; a general absence of user resource issues, such as ability to receive and interpret information; and “control” and presentational professionalism (often termed “spin”) as defining logics. We contend that the way in which the debates about the interaction between government and citizen have been framed will have a major impact on how e-government will develop in future. As Bill Dutton (1993) has noted, “Digital government can erode or enhance democratic processes . . . [but] the outcome will be determined by the interaction of policy choices, management strategies and cultural responses—not by advanced technology alone . . . The debate over appropriate policies for guiding the application of ICTs in politics and governance needs to begin in earnest” (1993).

The core ideas and techniques associated with “putting government online” first emerged in the most technologically advanced Western countries, especially those whose populations were pioneers in the adoption of the Internet in the 1990s. In the United States, President Bill Clinton’s administration’s aim to “reinvent government” closely followed the managerial path, and the Bush administration has further developed this agenda, with an even greater emphasis on cost reduction through efficiency gains. In the British case, the managerial use of ICTs emerged as a strong theme in the Labour administration’s obsession with “joined-up government”—a phrase that has recently crossed the Atlantic to the U.S. At the level of the European Union, despite greater recognition of the democratic potential of new ICTs, most discussion has centered on issues of efficiency and “service delivery.” It was the United States and Britain (along with other countries, notably Canada and Australia) that led the way, both in establishing a basic informational form of Web presence in the mid-1990s and in developing what became known as “e-government” in the late 1990s.

As a supranational body with an increasing amount of influence on its member states, the European Union—especially the European Commission—has also been an important actor in defining the scope and purpose

of public-sector use of ICTs since the 1990s under the auspices of its Information Society Project. The former strategy often went little further than placing government information on the Web, in a simple electronic version of the traditional paper-based means of dissemination that had prevailed up to then. But the genuine arrival of e-government, which signaled the acceptance of Internet connectivity as a tool that could be used to improve efficiency, cut costs, and change the way in which governments had traditionally interacted with citizens, constituted a potentially dramatic shift. Though we argue that change is not likely to enhance democracy, even if taken on its own rather limited terms, it is still clear that the public sector is being altered by e-government innovations.

Borrowing in part from some of the core themes of the “new institutionalism,” we begin from the perspective that understanding the development of public policy and administrative reforms—at least in those political systems that exhibit genuine policy debates—involves unraveling and analyzing the ideas that proved dominant at key stages of the policy process (for a recent useful summary, see Reich). Institutions of governance are embedded within historical and ideological contexts, such that even potentially radical and, on the surface, “new” ways of working are not acting upon a tabula rasa, but must accommodate pre-existing biases and constraints. E-government reforms are no exception to this process. It is equally the case that, once set in train, policy innovations soon become dependent upon the key values and discourses (meaning, very broadly, ways of organizing knowledge) that frame them during their decisive early phases. Thus, if we want to understand what often seem to be extremely fast-moving policy changes and innovative administrative reforms, we need to examine the kinds of claims that have been made about their potential, and what kinds of discourses have tended to be more influential as policy has developed.

When it comes to e-government, the ways in which the debates about the interaction between government and citizen have been framed have had a major impact on governments’ new electronic forms. And the future deployment of ICTs will inevitably be shaped by the manner in which policies set out priorities for their use. When it comes to an area such as ICTs, this process is even more firmly rooted due to the fact that most states lack the resources, both technical and financial, to build systems and hardware from scratch; they have always outsourced software development to private firms and now buy the vast bulk of their hardware from private suppliers in “off the shelf” forms. What this means in practice is that governments have spent much of their energy on defining the *uses* to which new technology is put, because administrative elites realize that once the “raw materials” required for electronic service delivery have been procured, they must work with what they have. Getting the ideas right in the first place—framing the purpose of technological deployment—becomes crucial. Guidelines and priorities become embedded within contractual agreements between governments as purchasers

and companies as providers of the technological means and soon become distributed within the broader political system and public debate. With these issues in mind, we focus on the ways in which e-government policies have embedded certain assumptions about the future potential of the Internet since the early 1990s.

### THREE MODELS OF INTERACTION

We begin by outlining what we see as three ideal-typical models of how e-government might reconfigure citizen-state relations. The three models of interaction have been influenced by Kenneth C. Laudon's pioneering work, *Communications Technology and Democratic Participation*. Laudon argued that "implicit in the development of certain information technologies are very definite models of democracy which differ considerably from one another" (14). Steering a path between technological determinism and overemphasizing political agency, Laudon maintained that technology "is a facilitating factor that interacts with existing historical, organizational, and environmental pressures to shape the future." "Yet," he wrote, "it is also clear that certain technologies facilitate some goals better than others" (19). Laudon developed a threefold typology of technological forms, each of which lent itself to a corresponding form of government. Data transformation technologies such as mainframes and databases were compatible with managerial democracy; mass-participation technologies such as opinion polling and interactive cable TV were suited to populist democracy; and interactive technologies—which, in 1977, meant telephone conference calls—fit with a "pluralist" model of democracy.

Although we make use of some of Laudon's insights, especially his description of "managerial democracy," there are some important differences. First, technology has developed considerably since the mid-1970s. Telephone conference calls have been displaced by personal computers linked to the Internet, with its relatively low costs and ease of use. The widespread use of the Internet makes it a potentially powerful political development, and makes possible the overlapping of the three models of interaction we identify. Secondly, Laudon's typology artificially restricted "mass" participation to one category—"populism." However, mass participation is a characteristic of each of the three models we identify (though the forms of participation obviously differ). Thirdly, in Laudon's framework, the managerial model was heavily associated with a "scientifically trained elite" at the heart of the U.S. federal government, reflecting Daniel Bell's analysis of the postindustrial society and the role of elite technicians (Bell). Since the emergence of the Internet, the expertise required to operate ICTs has been significantly reduced. While the design and installation of new ICTs undoubtedly requires expert knowledge, their daily operation can now be more easily adapted to pre-existing cultures of governance and individual skill levels. Interest in ICT applications in government has spread well beyond the confines of the

“technocracy.” Fourthly, there have, of course, been critical shifts in the values underpinning government in both Britain and the United States since Laudon’s work appeared, which can be gathered together under the heading of the “new public management” (NPM). Whether the advent of the Internet is dismantling the fundamental structures of NPM remains to be seen (Dunleavy and Margetts), but it seems certain that the use of ICTs in government since the mid-1990s has been conditioned by changes Laudon could not have foreseen. Finally, Laudon was chiefly concerned with technological forms, while we are concerned with both the forms and the discourses that are used by political actors to legitimize their behavior.

The three models of interaction below are designed as ideal types. They have been constructed following a reading of the existing literature (normative and empirical) on the relationship between ICTs, politics, and democratic theory and they are then used in the main body of the paper to undertake a cross-national comparison of the development of e-government policy in three political arenas. Until the late 1990s, this was a relatively restricted field. New texts are becoming available each month, though there are still very few cross-national comparisons of the kind we undertake. We have attempted to include in these models features that are inherent in technological forms *and* modes of behavior in citizen-state relationships (for a similar approach, see Hacker). While we fully appreciate there could be several subvariants of our models, there are always likely to be tradeoffs between the benefits of simplicity and concision, on the one hand, and the dangers of too broad generalization, on the other.

Some of the literature on the relationship between ICTs, politics, and democratic theory is of a futuristic—even utopian—bent. The normative-empirical distinction is often collapsed, as arguments in favor of how the Internet ought to transform government are intertwined with how far matters have or have not progressed. Our threefold typology tries to integrate this, by rendering salient both theory and practice—past, present, and future. While this does not immediately square with some existing approaches to modeling in policy analysis, the method we have adopted here allows us to think creatively about the gap between possibilities and practice, potential and reality, that is at the core of our argument that democratic interaction is being sidelined by managerialism.

With these issues in mind, we generated each model by asking six basic questions:

- What role is played by government?
- Who are the principal actors and interests?
- What is the dominant perspective on the flow of information?
- What are the principal mechanisms for interaction between government and citizens?

- What attention is paid to the ability of citizens to interact electronically?
- What is the defining logic, or *raison d'être*, of each model?

Table 1, which follows our discussion, provides a comparative summary of the models.

### A Managerial Model

In the managerial model of interaction, ICTs are largely seen as a quantitative improvement on previous technologies. Public services will continue as before but will be made more “efficient,” where “efficiency” means increased speed of delivery combined with a reduction in costs. ICTs remove some of the friction within state bureaucracies that is identified by governments as a major cause of citizen disquiet. Horizontal flows of information will be improved in order to break down unhelpful departmental boundaries and entrenched vertical hierarchies (Bellamy, Horrocks, and Webb, 93–94; National Audit Office). For example, a leading proponent of this perspective, Don Tapscott suggests that ICTs “not only . . . reduce the costs of government but also radically transform the way government programs are delivered and the very nature of governance. Internetworked government can overcome the barriers of time and distance to perform the business of government and give people public information and services when and where they want them” (163). Tapscott sees this as a renewal of established government functions rather than an opening up of citizen access. The “seven themes of internetworked government” Tapscott (167–175) outlines are:

- administrative renewal (faster, more efficient bureaucracies);
- integrated digital benefits transfer;
- integrated digital *access* to government information;
- government fostered information initiatives (to establish databanks of social information);
- intergovernmental tax filing, reporting, and payments processing;
- national (and global) law enforcement and public safety networks; and
- government/client communication initiatives.

Although the last category might plausibly include the notion of better communications from citizen to government, the use of the word “client” indicates the narrowness of Tapscott’s perspective. Thus, ICTs will enhance the delivery of services, with more accurately targeted communication of citizen requests and faster responses, but the democratic

TABLE 1  
**Three Models of Interaction in E-Governance: Summary**

	Managerial	Consultative	Participatory
Role for government	Regulatory; responding to the needs of the "new economy"; efficient and faster delivery of government information to citizens and "users."	Regulatory; responding to needs of societal interests as expressed electronically; <i>better</i> policy provision to citizens and "users."	Protector of free speech and rights of expression, regulator of infrastructure, but little beyond that; civil society exists away from the state and (will be) mediated electronically.
Principal actors and interests	Government and its "customers"; business; the mass media.	Government; "customers"; business; interest groups.	Voluntary associations and interest groups spontaneously interacting within "cyberspace"; groups use information gleaned through deliberation to influence government.
Flow of information	Unilinear from government to "customers" or customers to government, but main emphasis on improving flow of information within government.	Unilinear from government to citizens or citizens to government.	Discursive and complex—citizens to citizens, citizens to government, government to citizens.
Principal mechanisms for interaction	Online tax returns; benefit claims; "one-stop shops"; updating of personal information held by public bureaucracies; government gathering and aggregation of "market research" data; government provision of information about its activities to media and public.	"E-voting" at elections; instant opinion polling; electronic input from voters and interest groups to government; "advisory" referendums; "electronic town meetings," and so on.	Autonomous pluralist mechanisms, such as discussion lists, Usenet, peer-to-peer technologies; time and distance become compressed, facilitating increased political participation and a "cyber civil society."
Usage issues	Market-based access and usage patterns; minimal state regulation and public education programs to equip consumers.	Market-based access and usage patterns; minimal state regulation and public education programs to equip citizens.	Universal access and widespread usage are prerequisites.
Defining logic	"Service delivery" and policy presentation.	"Technical accuracy" and improved policy success rate.	"Deliberation," participation and enhanced democracy.

possibilities of such communications are generally ignored. Those with the power of decision over IT procurement in government justify public expenditure on information-processing on the grounds that it will improve “service delivery” and little else.

At the center of the managerial model is a presumption that change is incremental. While ICTs may represent both challenges and opportunities for the practice of governments (their interactions with the domestic economy and, more widely, civil society), their basic operational logic remains unaltered. The state’s role in the economy is largely unchanged: continuing the neoliberal hegemony of recent times in much of Western Europe and the United States, the state remains a noninterventionist facilitator of private economic life. The “information economy,” while changing the types of regulation required (though often merely requiring the expansion of existing regulation into new, technologically defined areas of economic interaction), does not require a radical rethinking of state activity.

The managerial model treats information as relatively simple and unilinear, rather than complex and discursively generated. Information can be “delivered” and will empower those previously unable to access it. The state is regarded as the authoritative source of information in society. Indeed, it may marginalize alternative providers of information, while seeking to establish certain meanings, certain agendas as “common sense” and legitimate. All the skills required to sift and comprehend publicly available information—not least accessibility—are considered (see, for example, IBM), but perceived as secondary, “technical” issues. This is a “push” model of information dissemination: the state will place information in accessible forums and the onus is on the user to access it. The audience members are seen as passive recipients, rather than interlocutors. State-produced information is a passive resource to be transferred between nodes in the information network. And while citizens are inescapably part of e-government networks, their role is not as important as that of the state, which *manages* the activity. In the bleakest critical vision, cyberspace becomes “normalized” into the routines of “politics as usual” (Margolis and Resnick).

### A Consultative Model

In direct contrast with the managerial model, the consultative model is a “pull” model. Here, ICTs facilitate the communication of citizen opinion to government. Information is regarded as a resource that can be used to provide “better” policy and administration. By utilizing the speed of ICT networks, governments can seek voter opinion on particular issues to guide policy-making, discovering what “real people” think. The consultative model is sometimes presented as facilitating direct access to government, unmediated by “special interest” groups that may distort



opinion, but, as Wayne Rash has shown, it is equally compatible with a group-based approach to politics.

This model encompasses a continuum of consultation, stretching from low-level information-gathering towards (but not finally reaching) a fuller, quasideliberative level of interaction and consultation. Some consultations are much more than the passive submission of information or opinion and can start to establish the type of interaction often heralded by supporters of “e-democracy.” Unlike the managerial model, this contains the seeds of greater democratic participation and thus represents a necessary element of a fully developed e-democracy, but it is not sufficient for the attainment of the type of e-democracy implied by the third (participatory) model (below). It may, however, represent a transition stage, easing the development of—and supporting the demands for—more participatory models of e-government.

This second model contains some recognition of how scarcity of resources determines access to government. Consequently, publicly available computers (for example, in libraries) and feedback “booths” in public spaces are crucial technological elements in the desire to establish links between government and citizen (Hansard Society). This approach fits with established practices, such as focus-group consultations and opinion polling, but aims to increase the sample size and frequency to ensure more representative polling. Much has been made of instant referenda, electronic voting, and the possibility of continuous democracy, leading to experiments with “electronic town halls” or time-limited consultations on single issues.

In its more critical manifestations, this model recognizes and tries to counter certain endemic problems with electronic forms of state-citizen interaction. Those who vote in consultative forums, and who contact government with their views, may be self-selected, ICT-literate groups whose views and prejudices may not be representative of citizens as a whole. Indeed, the ability to use technology in the manner proposed may be unevenly spread through the state itself, as well as civil society. There are also the common problems of direct democracy—notably the difficulty of framing policy alternatives in ways that will solicit broadly comparable (and informed) responses and the possibility that both government and organized groups may be able to mobilize electronic campaigns to further their own aims, or may only seek consultation in certain policy areas or with certain groups. Indeed, it becomes possible for government to poll relatively small sections of the electorate and, in turn, “narrowcast” information back. Government may be able to define the interests of a particular group in a particular way, and keep that strategy hidden from other potentially affected interests (Abramson, Arterton, and Orren, 49–54; Van De Donk and Tops, 24).

As with the managerial model, information is usually regarded as a passive resource. Communication by direct question-asking activity is

based on the need to generate quantifiable and comparable responses to particular policy innovations. Indeed, frequently the consultative model may only allow inputs that fit within the parameters already set by policy-makers. Opinions that question the basis of policy-making itself may be regarded as “ill informed” or “ideologically driven.”

### A Participatory Model

While the first two models of interaction stress the *vertical* flows of state-citizen communication, the participatory model conceives of a more complex, *horizontal*, and *multidirectional* interactivity. It is assumed that while states may facilitate political discussion and interaction, they are but one association among many with a presence in civil society. Other sites of political discourse and interaction have emerged (and will continue to emerge), even though the state may remain the principal target of organized political action.

An early, wide-ranging, and highly influential statement of this kind of approach was produced in 1980 by Yoneji Masuda, a scholar who played a decisive role in shaping the values of Japan’s high-tech sector in the post war period. Masuda (83) suggested that the “technical difficulties that until now have made it impossible for large numbers of citizens to participate in policy-making have now been solved.” Since there were no longer practical barriers to citizen involvement, countries embracing the information age could move towards participatory democracy (Masuda, 84–87). This led to Masuda’s six basic principles of political participation in an information society (all emphases in original):

- All citizens would have to participate in decision-making, or at least the maximum number.
- The spirit of synergy and mutual assistance should permeate the whole system (“synergy” means that *each person co-operates and acts from his or her own standpoint in solving common problems* and “mutual assistance” implies *readiness to voluntarily sacrifice one’s own interests for the common good, to level out the disadvantages and sacrifices to other persons and/or groups*).
- All relevant information should be available to the public (in addition, *people will be expected to provide information voluntarily to contribute to a solution of any question*).
- All the benefits received and sacrifices made by citizens should be distributed equitably among them.
- A solution should be sought by persuasion and agreement.
- Once decided, all citizens would be expected to co-operate in applying the solution.

Widespread participation, Masuda argued, could act as a brake on the dissemination of misleading information by the state and corporate sector. In a precursor to the claims made for open-source software such as the Linux operating system, Masuda maintained the greater the number of individuals involved in the management of the system through participation, the less likely it was that information could be captured by monopoly interests. Many other visions of the participatory model exist, but Masuda's extraordinary attempt to lay the foundations of the information age (as he saw it) on a set of values is striking.

The participatory model contains a recognition that knowledge is discursive, contingent, and changeable—that it emerges through interaction. It has obvious “utopian” leanings, but at the same time, advocacy of an active civil society need not rest upon a desire to sweep away representative structures. The explosion of interest in “social capital” during the last ten years has demonstrated how these themes may enter the political mainstream, often in tandem with an argument about the role of the Internet in producing that elusive resource (see, for example, Hill and Hughes; Putnam 1993, 2000; Rich).

In the participatory model, interaction is regarded as constitutive of democracy itself. Opinion formation and political action based on forums, groups, or new “virtual communities” enlivens and furthers the development of civil society (Rheingold; Schalken). As Kenneth Hacker (5) writes, “Concepts like bandwidth, fast response, personalness, social presence, etc. do not explain interactivity. What is most defining about interactivity is how messages are related closely together in a sequence of message exchange.” The principal focus is on voluntary association and the development of new communities of interest. Here, the proliferation of the Usenet, bulletin boards, chat rooms, file-sharing, and peer-to-peer networking are seen as positive and organic deliberative mechanisms. Importantly, the state will still have to protect liberal-democratic values of free speech and expression that might otherwise be disregarded, while also providing infrastructure and regulation.

There is a common assertion that “access is enough,” and that online citizens will be able to make use of the information available from non-state sources to bring pressure to bear on government. Furthermore, eventually, all ICT-mediated interactions will help to build a new “cyber civil society,” which enhances the participatory potential for all citizens. Thus, the current limited set of interactions (typified by the first two models above) is characteristic of a period of transition: the “real” cybersociety will be participatory in its logic and practice, despite the resistance that may be encountered initially.

A more gloomy prognosis, but one which still holds to the central tenets of this model, views the characteristic trends of post industrial democracies—fragmentation and single-issue politics—as being intensified under the weight of new information networks. The “accelerated pluralism” identified by Bruce Bimber could never be characterized

as utopia, but it still rests upon the view that popular participation in groups, as citizens come together to assert their demands, is made possible in new and different ways by the Internet. Even if online citizen campaigns will occur infrequently and be dominated by those with sufficient resources to mobilize, R. D. Arnold's theory of potential information—used to explain the behavior of members of the U.S. Congress—suggests that increasing the pool of publicly available information will force political elites to bow to the pressure of *potential* citizen awareness. As Bimber puts it, "The result may be a political system in which issues develop and move more quickly because of the quicker cycle of mobilization and response, and in which government officials increasingly hear from and respond to new kinds of groups—those without large, stable memberships or affiliations with established institutions" (58).

### THE EVOLUTION OF "E-GOVERNMENT"

Having sketched out three models of interaction, we now turn to discussion of the development of the e-government agendas in the United States, Britain, and the European Union. In each case, we focus on the key policy statements that have defined the dominant approach. In the U.S. case, we examine documents published by the National Partnership for Reinventing Government and the General Services Administration. In the British case, we focus on material produced by the Cabinet Office, specifically from the Office of the E-Envoy and the Central Information Technology Unit. For the European Union, we focus on documents produced by the European Commission itself and those produced by the Information Society Project Office, the main conduit for advice to the Commission on ICT policy. We are concerned throughout with delineating the evolution of basic underlying assumptions about the use of ICTs at the level of national and, to a lesser extent, supranational government.<sup>1</sup>

#### The United States

In the United States, the Clinton/Gore administration of the 1990s made many appeals to the transformative power of information technology, and in the summer of 2000, the federal government launched the first government "portal" of its kind. Initially little more than a Yahoo-style directory, rather than the more ambitious government "gateway" U.S. citizens were promised, it was further developed by the Bush administration. Integrating the gargantuan amount of government information—with the emphasis on individual transactions with government—is the culmination of a process that began with the National Performance Review (NPR) of 1993. The application of ICTs was at the heart of the NPR, and its descendant, the National Partnership for Reinventing Government's AccessAmerica program of 1997. Both were coordinated by Al Gore's Office of the Vice President, and Gore was quick to emphasize how ICTs could be harnessed

to broader objectives of cost-cutting and increases in productivity that were at the center of the debate on “re-engineering government” that emerged in the early 1990s. Importantly, the e-government agenda in the United States, like that in the other lead countries, was heavily dominated by the executive branch, especially the Office of the President, operating chiefly through the Office of Management and Budget and the General Services Administration. Several “accompanying reports” appeared alongside the main NPR report, and ICTs were considered important enough to warrant this special treatment (National Performance Review 1993b). The aims of the main NPR report of 1993 were explicit:

Our goal is to make the entire federal government both less expensive and more efficient, and to change the culture of our national bureaucracy away from complacency and entitlement toward initiative and empowerment. We intend to redesign, to reinvent, to reinvigorate the entire national government . . . We need a federal government that treats its taxpayers as if they were customers and treats taxpayer dollars with the respect for the sweat and sacrifice that earned them. (National Performance Review 1993a, introduction, paragraphs 1 and 10)

It is ironic, but understandable, that the first NPR report contained very little discussion of the Internet—it was only just beginning to capture the political imagination, and was at this time the preserve of universities, the military, and the information technologies (IT) industry. However, the Clinton administration made up for this with the 1997 update on the NPR, *AccessAmerica* (National Partnership for Reinventing Government 1997). Both were unambiguous in their view that the Internet could be used to “re-engineer” the relationship between government and citizens.

A major issue at the time was how existing government ICTs might fit in with the NPR agenda. The NPR argued that current systems could be modernized in ways that would allow their inherent properties to be used more intensively. Increased automation was the order of the day: “As everyone knows,” it stated, “the computer revolution allows us to do things faster and more cheaply than we ever have before . . . [B]y simplifying paperwork and reducing administrative costs, we expect to save \$3.3 billion over 5 years in the cost of administering grant programs to state and local governments” (1993a, preface). But the emulation of private-sector management practices was also at the forefront of the program. Government in the “Information Age,” as the report termed it, was to adapt in the way that large, vertically organized corporate bureaucracies had been forced to adapt. The creation of “entrepreneurial organizations” was dependent upon new working practices. ICTs would assist in the creation of “customer-focused” public bureaucracies.

But were citizens inevitably customers? An important implication of the Internet is that it allows interaction between citizens and political elites across the whole government apparatus, not just the legislative branch. This renders possible a new and different relationship between public bureaucracies and those whom they serve. In the consultative and

participatory models outlined above, citizens are able to be *citizens*, not just consumers, in their interactions with government. They are able to augment the tasks of scrutiny and accountability performed by legislatures. But in one swift move the implications of this distinction were buried; the limits of “e-government” were narrowed from the outset. In a moment of clarity, the NPR entered into a potentially radical discussion of the difference between the role of citizen and consumer, only to shelve its implications for the remainder of the report, and, as it turned out, all future reports. It (1993a, section 5, paragraphs 10–11) stated:

By “customer” we do not mean “citizen.” A citizen can participate in democratic decision-making; a customer receives benefits from a specific service. All Americans are citizens. Most are also customers . . . In a democracy, citizens and customers both matter. But when they vote, citizens seldom have much chance to influence the behavior of public institutions that directly affect their lives: schools, hospitals, farm service agencies, social security offices. It is a sad irony: citizens own their government, but private businesses they do not own work much harder to cater to their needs.

Like other statements of this kind, this can, of course, be interpreted as a classic piece of NPM ideology. It may even be seen as a typical new right critique of the flaws of state intervention. But it is important to stress here that in this vision of e-government, individuals were to have influence over government services as customers, but not as citizens. The managerial model, with its accommodation of customer feedback as a means of improving government, was positioned at the center of the NPR. It could have been possible to discuss mechanisms beyond the customer service approach, which might have involved citizens *as citizens* using ICTs to influence policy and service delivery, but this was not considered appropriate by the NPR. The following benefits were offered instead: “Electronic government overcomes the barriers of time and distance to perform the business of government and give people public information and services when and where they want them. It can swiftly transfer funds, answer questions, collect and validate data, and keep information flowing smoothly within and outside government” (National Performance Review 1993b, executive summary, paragraph 10).

In a theme that was to find similar expression in demands for “joined-up government” in Britain, the NPR established the idea of “virtual agencies” as a means of coordinating efforts across a large and rambling administrative machine. In future, customers would not need to have knowledge of the structure of government; instead, they would be able to transact on the basis of a number of clearly identifiable “service themes” (National Performance Review 1993b, section IT01, paragraph 16). These would supposedly be based on intuitively expressed customer demand, rather than the producer-driven needs of the agency. Customers would transact with several different agencies without realizing it, while those agencies involved would find it easier to share information and make decisions.

How would customers transact with government? The benefits system—which includes the administration of food stamps, unemployment benefit, Medicare, Medicaid, child support, and related social-security benefits—would shift to a system of electronic transfer. Customer inquiries would be automated or handled more efficiently through the use of call centers and one-stop shops. Individuals would file their tax returns online. Electronic kiosks would be placed in benefits offices and other public buildings, allowing access to government information sites and the submission of electronic forms. E-mail use would be expanded across the federal government. A national network for “law enforcement” and “public safety” would be established to enable communication within the criminal justice system and emergency services. Businesses would be able to use a new database on international trade. “Home buyers” would consult a new environmental database (National Performance Review 1993b).

It was perhaps understandable that the 1993 report should underplay citizen-government interaction for the purposes of enhancing democratic decision-making. However, the ways in which these issues were originally framed went on to have a decisive influence long after the popularization of the Internet. Much that had been proposed in the early 1990s was close to being achieved by the time of the *AccessAmerica* report of 1997. Most notable was the establishment of the foundations of an electronic benefits-transfer system. By this time, Internet usage had exploded in the United States. But the main difference between the Internet and prior technologies—its relatively low costs, ease of access/use, potential for interaction, and fast-approaching ubiquity—were the report’s major blind spots (National Partnership for Reinventing Government 1997). Although acknowledgements of the Internet’s simplifying logic had taken place, with the establishment of a new White House site, a new emphasis on Internet-based customer interfaces for the retrieval of information held in databases, and the role of e-commerce in public procurement (soon labeled “e-procurement”), the overall design was strikingly similar to the essentially pre-Internet report of 1993. Despite the “explosive use and capacity” of the Internet, the “highlights” of *AccessAmerica* are quoted in Table 2.

One theme present in the 1993 report—the need for coordination across government—was brought to the forefront of *AccessAmerica*, with plans for a new Government Services Information Infrastructure (GSII). Developed by the Government Information Technology Services board, the GSII is a variation of the intranet concept—an internal organizational network designed to allow cross-agency collaboration between groups of workers (National Partnership for Reinventing Government 1997, section A15, paragraph 4).

Progress on the targets set by *AccessAmerica* was slower than expected. As a consequence, Clinton issued an executive memorandum in December 1999, calling upon agency heads to accelerate and intensify the appli-

TABLE 2

***AccessAmerica: The Pioneer of Online Public Service Delivery***

- 
- Seniors will provide facts just once to cover Medicare and all pension programs; payment will, of course, be directed to their account, accessed by a single card that they carry in their wallet or purse.
  - Police on the street will get electronic fingerprint checks and criminal records while suspects are in their grasp, not weeks later.
  - Parents will check environmental conditions around town before picking out a new house.
  - Students will make their application for loans, get their answers, and—if approved—receive their funds online.
  - Communities will seek grants, apply for permits, and file reports electronically.
  - Companies seeking export markets for their products will go online to a one-stop government shop for export assistance.
  - And behind the scenes for all these transactions, the government will be operating an electronic system that, compared to today's paper-based services, improves privacy and security for individuals.
- 

*Source:* National Partnership for Reinventing Government 1997, introduction, paragraph 12.

cation of ICTs. Of particular concern was the failure to introduce coordinating mechanisms that would make it easier for customers to access services regardless of the originating agency—a principle which found expression in the FirstGov portal, launched in September 2000 (National Partnership for Reinventing Government 2000). FirstGov was at once significant and unremarkable. The portal concept, which was seen as the holy grail for the private Internet sector in the mid-1990s, is now commonplace. There is, therefore, little novelty in applying this concept to government Web sites. However, the FirstGov approach—like its corresponding project in the U.K., discussed below—constitutes an intensification of managerialism. It is, without doubt, the nearest any government has come to presenting an easily navigable interface to public services, with a distinct emphasis on the individual consumer. Each of the ways in which it is possible to transact with government is laid out in celebratory list fashion, with four organizing sections: “Shop Online,” “Apply, File, Register Or Print Forms Online,” “Check Performance Online,” and “Let the Government Know.” The last of these encourages customer-type feedback, but even this was qualified by the statement that “We are unable at this time to respond directly to any e-mails” (FirstGov). FirstGov, likely to be the core of e-government in the U.S. for some time, is perhaps more important for what it represents in the broadest sense—the ubiquity of the Internet and its associated protocols, file formats, and “look and feel” as a medium—than for its contribution to democratic politics.



## Britain

The U.S. government was a good five years ahead of the U.K. when it came to positioning ICTs at the center of a concern to energize the public sector, but the National Performance Review's framing of them in terms of their contribution to "service delivery" and little else had a profound impact elsewhere. In common with the executive-dominated approach adopted in the U.S., Britain's development of "e-government" was spearheaded by the Cabinet Office, specifically the Office of the E-Envoy and the Central Information Technology Unit (CITU). In Britain, the Labour government, elected in May 1997, claimed that it was developing a "new" approach to state-citizen interaction. In fact, it owed much to the previous Conservative government's green paper of November 1996, *Government Direct*. This explicitly framed the approach in managerial terms when it (1996, paragraph 4.1) set out three basic aims: "to provide better and more efficient services to business and to citizens, improve the efficiency and openness of government administration, and secure substantial cost savings for the taxpayer." As with the U.S. NPR report of 1993, the new form of state-citizen interaction was to be based on the following: "providing information, collecting taxes, granting licenses, administering regulations, paying grants and benefits, collecting and analyzing statistics, and procuring goods and services" (CITU, Cabinet Office 1996, paragraph 1.4).

The Conservatives' green paper also set out a peculiar, but strategic, conflation of the terms "citizen," "business," and "customer." In an interesting formulation, which is at the center of managerialism, it spoke of the aim "to make electronic direct delivery of services the preferred option for the majority of government's customers (both citizens and businesses)" (1996, paragraph 5.2). "Citizens" and "businesses" both became "consumers" of government services.

Several of the dominant themes of NPM were in evidence, notably the need for "efficiency through rationalization" and cost-cutting, but these existed in tension with optimistic statements about the potential for ICTs to provide "extra connections," coherence, and coordination across government. Government emerged as an important provider of information—mainly to companies, though the Major government's "Citizen's Charter" program, designed to make public-service providers more accountable, had obvious affinities with the new medium of the Internet (CITU, Cabinet Office 1996, paragraphs 6.12–6.18). Only one sentence in the whole thirty-eight-page document made direct mention of how ICTs might provide for greater citizen influence on policy-making: "E-mail will also make it easier for people to contribute views to the policy-making process" (CITU, Cabinet Office 1996, paragraph 9.4). Elsewhere, the dominant discourse remained managerial.

When the Labour Party came to power in 1997, most of the Conservatives' plans were incorporated into the broader *Modernising Government*

white paper of 1999. There were important shifts in emphasis, as phrases such as “joined-up government” were central to the new vision. But the dominant theme of individual consumers and “business” benefiting from improved service delivery was retained. Again, the principal framework of the white paper was established by an emphasis on “modernization,” “efficiency,” and “quality”:

This Government believes in the public service and public servants. But that does not mean the public service at any price. The British public has grown accustomed to consumer choice and competition in the private sector. If our public service is to survive and thrive, it must match the best in its ability to innovate, to share good ideas, and to control costs. Above all, the public service must deliver efficiently and effectively the policies, programs and services of government. (Cabinet Office, section 4, paragraph 1)

The key aim here was for government to emulate those private-sector practices that involve innovative use of ICTs in information and “knowledge management.” Government would become a “learning organization” (Cabinet Office, section 5, paragraph 2). Internet and internal networking technologies, such as the Government Secure Intranet (GSI), it was argued, would have the potential to integrate a diverse range of information sources and improve the “business of government” by bringing departments together in “online meetings and discussion groups” (CITU, Cabinet Office 2000a, 21). It is not without significance that the U.K. government’s proposed definition of e-commerce, submitted to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s definition working group, includes both private- and public-sector transactions (Performance and Innovation Unit, section 3, paragraph 4). The aim was to blur the lines between public and private activity in ways that would appeal to the entrepreneurial “new economy” companies upon which the British government would have to rely to develop e-government systems.

The *Modernising Government* white paper was a relatively ambitious agenda for public-sector reform and was certainly the boldest statement of the principles around which Whitehall might have to be organized since the Next Steps initiatives of the 1980s and early 1990s. The perception that disaggregating and decentralizing the civil service under Next Steps had led to unhelpful fragmentation hung heavily over the document. E-government was seen as one way to reintegrate the administrative machine, but in ways that were dynamic and subtle enough to accommodate the principles of the new public management and that—at the rhetorical level, at least—avoided “going back” to the old “public service” values that had characterized the British state during the last period when Labour had been in office, between 1974 and 1979. The British government provided one of the clearest visions of what e-government might look like in the section entitled “Information Age Government,” quoted in Table 3.

But with the possible and partial exception of the last category of benefits, these all stand squarely within the accepted parameters of manage-

TABLE 3  
**The UK Approach: *Modernising Government***

ICTs would:

- make it easier for business and individuals to deal with government.
- enable government to offer services and information through new media such as the Internet or interactive TV.
- improve communications between different parts of government so that people do not have to be asked repeatedly for the same information by different service providers.
- give staff at call centers and other offices better access to information, so that they can deal with members of the public more efficiently and more helpfully.
- make it much easier for different parts of government to work in partnership: central government with local authorities or the voluntary sector, or government with third-party delivery channels such as the Post Office or private-sector companies.
- help government to become a learning organization by improving our access to and organization of information.

*Source:* Cabinet Office, section 5, paragraph 5.

rialism. The last point hints at the possibility of some consultation, but still regards information as being “accessed,” rather than developed through deliberation. Businesses and citizens as “customers” would be able to “transact” with government in a number of ways: they would book driving tests, look for employment, submit tax returns, get advice about benefits and health, use the new National Grid for Learning, apply for career development loans and grants, and receive payments from government for “the supply of goods and services” (Cabinet Office, section 5, paragraph 11). But citizens as political participants would be able to do very little. They hardly appeared in the white paper. Indeed, the role of research and assessment was accorded considerably more weight in the section on policy-making than were any attempts to use ICTs to consult with citizens. And nowhere did attempts to consult directly with the public through electronic networks appear as a path of possible development. While such developments as the People’s Panel (a 5,000-strong representative group, regularly consulted by the polling company MORI on behalf of government, which sat between 1998 and 2002; Cabinet Office, section 3, paragraph 7) might have looked like a move in the direction of participatory models of interaction, the characterization of its members as “customers” of public services was significant, as was the fact that none of the People’s Panel consultations occurred via the Internet.

By the time of the British government’s “strategic framework for the public services” *E-Government* report of 2000—arguably the most coherent statement of what e-government will look like produced by any government to date—it proved relatively straightforward to frame public-sector ICTs in terms of “better services for citizens and businesses and more effective use of the Government’s information resources,” along

with “the application of e-business methods throughout the public sector” (CITU, Cabinet Office 2000a, 1). In a document that ran to thirty-four pages, there were only two, rather vague, references to consultative and participatory possibilities: there would be “greater democratic participation and openness” and a “better informed and more participative democracy through electronic consultation and better responses to feedback” (CITU, Cabinet Office 2000a, 6, 8). The mechanisms through which this might be achieved were left undefined. This stood in stark contrast to the relatively detailed proposals for interaction with “business.”

### **The European Union**

The U.S.-Britain axis undoubtedly led the way in e-government (with some important parallel developments in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand that are beyond the scope of this article). Increasingly, however, states in the EU—Britain being no exception—must integrate their programs of state reform with those being implemented at the EU level (Hoff, Horrocks, and Tops). Perhaps more than any other program of administrative reform in its history, the EU—especially the European Commission—has embraced the idea of e-government.

At the European level, the primary motors were the European Commission itself and the Information Society Project Office, the main conduit for advice on ICT policy to the Commission. European initiatives were initially (and heavily) shaped by the report from the High-Level Group on the Information Society (chaired by Martin Bangemann), delivered to the European Council in 1994 and unanimously adopted that year. Stressing the market-driven character of the information economy, the Bangemann Report (European Council) listed “ten applications to launch the information society”:

- teleworking;
- distance learning;
- a network for universities and research centers;
- telematic services for small and medium-sized enterprises;
- road traffic management;
- air traffic control;
- health-care networks;
- electronic tendering;
- a trans-European administration network; and
- city-information highways.

Not only did the report make little mention of democracy, but it quite explicitly urged the European Union to “put its faith in market mecha-

nisms as the motive power to carry us into the Information Age" (European Council, 2). It also silenced, through exclusion, labor unions, cultural and academic institutions, and social movements, among others (Kaitatzi-Whitlock, 53–54). Where member states' governments or the EU's own agencies appeared, they were regarded as service providers to the private sector. Despite some later moves away from this exclusively business-oriented agenda, the report largely set the parameters of early debates at the EU level.

In February 1995, the European Commission convened the advisory Information Society Forum (ISF) (ISF 1996). Despite the ISF's first annual report being entitled "Networks for People and their Communities," only one of its working groups considered the "improvement of democratic structures." It concluded that "the development of networks and operating systems must ensure all citizens, regardless of geography, social or economic status, have the opportunity to *participate by providing basic services* which address the needs of all sections of society" (ISF 1996, working group 2, report summary; emphasis added). The unusual notion that the improvement of democracy involves the provision of "services" firmly locates the working group's position within managerialism.

Any notion that ICTs might be used to enhance democratic deliberation or accountability was also absent from the second annual ISF report (ISF 1997). The trend was also evident in the European Ministerial Conference's declaration appended to it. Of the sixty-eight interlinked statements, only one made mention of democracy: "Global Information Networks contribute to democracy by improving communication between citizens and their administrations and facilitating active participation in the democratic process" (ISF 1997, 62). The ministers' meeting at Bonn in July 1997 was mainly occupied with the promotion of the information economy and its support services. The lack of interest in the democratic potential of ICTs was replicated in the "User's Declaration" appended to this report. Here, "participation" was assumed to be participation in the market and economic relations, not in politics. While government efficiency and service delivery were highlighted, these users, at least, had no interest in democratic deliberation (ISF 1997, 69–73).

The dominant emphasis on the information economy was also evident in a 1998 Commission green paper. Largely focused on accessing and using public-sector information, the paper (1998, chapter 2) referred to information services to retrieve sorted and classified information on demand, communication services to interact with individuals (private or corporate) or groups of people (e.g., via e-mail or discussion forums), and transaction services to acquire products or services online or to submit data (e.g., government forms, voting). Leaving aside the notion that voting is merely a form of data submission, it was hinted that ICTs might be used for citizen-government interactions that expand on mere information delivery and retrieval. But, in its short discussion of transaction services, the report returned to an emphasis on form submissions and the

accessibility of public information. In its response to the green paper, the ISF noted its desire to ensure access to "vital information," which lay at the center of its declarations regarding the construction of an "informed democracy" (see, e.g., IFS 1998a, 1998b). However, the response made no significant intervention regarding the provision and expansion of the mechanisms that would deliver anything approaching "e-democracy" (ISF 1999b).

Elsewhere in Brussels, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations, and Social Affairs convened a high-level expert group in 1995, which delivered its final report in April 1997 (European Commission 1997). Given that the group was reporting to this directorate-general, it is not surprising that it emphasized the notion of an information *economy*. However, it did include a final (twelfth) set of policy recommendations on the theme of "Transparency and Democracy." Issues of service provision and access cropped up elsewhere in the report's recommendations, but in the final section, the group turned to "maintaining pluralism" and "a democracy project" for the European Union. Although this initially took the form of concerns over media ownership and control, the authors also stressed that access to information was not only uneven but also not sufficient for the immediate development of a more participatory democracy. This led the group to offer a final set of policy recommendations. It wished to "step up the interaction between politicians and citizens and increase the latter's participation in political debate and decision-making; clarify how issues relating to human rights, xenophobia, social values, etc., should be approached in the information society; [and] improve our understanding and the transparency of the democratic process in both national and EU institutions" (European Commission 1997, 51–52). Despite being the last recommendation of the report, this putative democracy project finally revealed an imagined e-democracy beyond the largely managerial suggestions that had typified the EU's policy.

Building on this recommendation, the European Commission called in 1999 for *e-Europe: An Information Society for All*. Managerialism remained dominant, but the document contained references to the need to go "beyond simply publishing legislation and white papers on the Web" and to "establish a discussion and feedback forum" (European Commission 1999, 16). However, while overall the Commission's document represented a hybrid mix of managerial and consultative models, it remained managerial in most aspects, clearly focusing on the "new economy" and global competitiveness (European Commission 1999, 6). Indeed, in a 2000 update on the e-Europe strategy, concern for democracy entirely evaporated, leaving a wide range of e-commerce and regulatory activities as the exclusive thrust of the project (European Commission 2000). As in the U.S. and Britain, the managerial model of e-government was the focus for activities, and other possibilities were ignored or marginalized.

## CONCLUSIONS

Given the diverse range of interactive behavior now made possible by ICTs, the absence of the consultative and participatory models in the development of e-government in our chosen cases is striking. It might be objected that the consultative and participatory models we identify are the domains not of executives but of legislatures, and that we should look to Congress and Parliament (even the relatively weak European Parliament) to fulfill these roles. But if the problem is defined differently, this view is less convincing. We would argue that the power asymmetry that exists between executives and legislatures (particularly in Britain and the level of the EU) means that the latter are not likely to significantly increase their power and influence through the use of ICTs. Executives are more likely to compromise the potential of ICTs to be used to reconfigure governance. But at the level of the executive branch, technological developments do make it possible to deliver managerial efficiency, as well as increased democratic influence. In other words, e-government potentially blurs the distinctions between executive and legislative functions by creating opportunities for citizens *as citizens* to have direct political influence upon public bureaucracies in ways that have not existed before. This will, of course, throw up its own issues of accountability, but we argue that this form of new public sector is not even likely to emerge unless policy is radically altered.

The managerialism we identify is perfectly capable of straddling different administrative cultures, in much the same way as NPM ideas seemed to spread during the early 1990s. E-government may simply turn out to be the latest in a long series of burnt-out hulks that were designed to solve problems with the "efficiency" of public bureaucracies.<sup>2</sup> E-government zealots do, of course, claim that something more fundamental is taking place. But even if a new "digital state paradigm" is about to replace NPM, as some have suggested (Dunleavy and Margetts), we would maintain that its characteristic features are still likely to be managerial and not consultative or participatory. Even if a "digital state" emerges, there are likely to be significant problems with incorporating citizen participation into policy-making. Many of these difficulties are independent of external factors such as the "digital divide" and technological difficulties associated with ICTs; they are determined by the old-fashioned vagaries of competitive elitism in liberal democratic political systems (Chadwick). Individuals may get better service as consumers from their governments, but as far as the possibilities of interactivity that are represented by the Internet are concerned, this is a bare minimum. As Hacker has argued, electronic democratization is the "enhancement of a democracy already initiated, with new communication technologies in ways that increase the political power of those who usually have minimal roles in key political processes. We assume that such democratization brings new people into power, rather than granting additional power to those who are already empowered" (2).

Notwithstanding our argument about national government, healthier signs exist at the local level. As the example of the successful Minnesota E-Democracy project (now in its eighth year) suggests, there may be greater possibilities for the development of participatory models of interaction at the local level, rather than the national. Certainly, where virtual communities have been established on the basis of co-location, the participatory model has emerged. The Santa Monica Public Electronic Network succeeded in bringing previously disenfranchised homeless people into local public spheres (Schmitz). The “Phoenix-at-your-fingertips” project has endeavored to establish a localized political forum mediated by ICTs, with some limited success (Wilhelm, 132–138).

However, these and other experiments have taken considerable time to widen involvement (even marginally) in local politics, and they have revealed the resistance in local government to these forms of direct citizen participation. Some groups have been more concerned to develop localized public spaces *autonomous* from government, whether local or national. Minnesota E-Democracy has deliberately sought, *not* to interact with government, but rather to promote an independent public sphere (Dahlberg). Thus, while these projects are interesting in themselves, the difference in scope and aims of many of them offers little encouragement for the swift development of participatory e-government at national level. For every Minnesota, there are dozens of managerial implementations of state/local e-government (Musso, Weare, and Hale). Some of these, such as that in Fairfax County, Virginia, are highly effective in their own terms and well regarded by administrators and technicians alike (National Academy of Public Administration).

It is also possible, of course, that the managerial model’s notion of the consumer may be perfectly acceptable to those who have interests other than democratic politics. The risks associated with much government technology procurement should not be discounted as an explanation for the timidity of e-government to date. In a number of cases—especially in the U.K., where some high-profile ICT projects have gone over budget and have yet to deliver the improvements in service originally promised—the utilization of new ICTs by central government departments has not proved an unalloyed success. The move to depress expectations may reflect this experience, alongside the limited interest that private-sector contractors have in notions of participation. Contractors in normal circumstances work with a consumer model of interaction because that is their business, and they bring this perspective to their work for government.

Indeed, it has been demonstrated by the “Irvine School” scholars that the adoption of new information technology tends to reinforce pre-existing power inequalities, both within government and between government and citizens (Danziger, Dutton, Kling, and Kraemer). In the U.K., several authors have argued that a close-knit policy community has heavily influenced decisions on the use of computers in government since



the 1980s, with the result that service delivery has prevailed over more democratic considerations (Bellamy, Horrocks, and Webb; Pratchett 1995, 1999).

Refusal to take citizen interaction seriously may also be found at the level of party organization. Research undertaken in 1998 discovered that British political party Web sites "contain only limited opportunities for interactivity" (Gibson and Ward, 31). If a significant objective of any (British) party is to present itself as a "government-in-waiting," it should be no surprise that once elected, party elites are relatively uninterested in exploring the interactive potential of the Internet. At a time when the commercial world is realizing the possibilities of online community-building through interactivity in order to boost sales, it is significant that most parties (and ultimately governments) in the developed world have been slow to adopt this strategy (Margolis, Resnick, and Tu; Margolis, Resnick, and Wolfe).

We have been concerned in this paper with revealing the constrained origins of e-government. Of course, things in this field change rapidly. There are signs that some programs are beginning to integrate more interactive and deliberative mechanisms. As early as 1999, Clinton called for every federal agency to make its officials more accessible through publication of e-mail addresses that could be used for questions and comments. At the same time, the National Science Foundation was charged with conducting a year-long feasibility study of "online voting" (Office of the President, Press Secretary 1999). The report, published in 2001, argued that major problems of authentication and security would have to be overcome before online voting in "real" elections could occur (National Science Foundation). Further experimentation with online participation was suggested by the President's Information Technology Advisory Committee in 2000, though it has to be said that this was just a small part of a report which overwhelmingly focused on using ICTs to improve the *internal* management of government information (President's Information Technology Advisory Committee 2000). At the time of this article's completion, the U.K. government's UKOnline portal had introduced a "citizen space" area for discussions (Office of the E-Envoy 2002). The EU was also staging various ongoing online consultations on issues such as cybercrime and data retention (EU Forum on Cybercrime).

While the possibility for increased participation is evident, to make the consultative and participatory models of interaction the characteristic manner in which citizens and states interact will take a radical reconfiguration of existing policy. So long as the managerial model continues to frame the discussion of e-government, the recognized possibilities will be limited to those that broadly accord with this model. As Michael Margolis and David Resnick write in their skeptical exploration of the "cyber-space revolution" in politics, although the Internet may present a challenge, national governments still enjoy "deep reservoirs of power and legitimacy . . . [They] will meet the challenges [of the Internet] and incor-

porate solutions within the existing structures of governance" (209). As our analysis of the origins and evolution of "e-government" policy reveals, achievements to date fall short of anything approaching "electronic democracy." The policy frameworks we have analyzed indicate that this was always likely to be the case.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Earlier versions of this article were delivered at the workshop on Electronic Democracy at the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Joint Workshops at Grenoble in April 2001 and at the American Political Science Association Annual (APSA) meeting in San Francisco, August–September 2001. The authors thank the ECPR participants (especially Christine Bellamy, Catherine Needham, Pippa Norris, Charles Raab, and Thomas Zittel) and the APSA panel (especially Chip Hauss and Ken Rogerson), as well as Oliver James and anonymous referees for *Governance*, for their helpful comments. Any errors or shortcomings are, of course, our own. Quantitative data analysis that directly complements this article may be downloaded from the E-Governance Resources Website at <http://www.rhul.ac.uk/sociopolitical-science/e-governance/>.

#### NOTES

1. Although an analysis of local initiatives might reveal different patterns (see Pratchett 1999; Weare, Musso, and Hale), this is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this article.
2. Computers of one kind or another have been seen as solutions to the problems of the public sector since Herman Hollerith's invention of punchcards to analyze the 1890 U.S. federal census data.

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