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progettazione partecipata
per le politiche pubbliche

The electronic Town Meeting

by Avventura Urbana
(Photo by Michele D'Ottavio for Avventura Urbana)

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Young Words Happening - City of Turin - TM 2005

E-TM for a regional law on citizens participation, Tuscany, 2006

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E-TM on citizens contribution to health system costs, Tuscany, 2007

Ideal EU on climate change Florence, Poitiers and Cornella del Llobregat - Italy 2008

France

Poitiers
Photos: Alexandre Pommier

Catalunia

Cornellà de Llobregat (Barcelona) - Citilab
Photos: Merche Navarro

The Town Meeting

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What is the aim of the Town Meeting?

Is a practice of deliberative democracy, that involves:

- **Active participation;**
- **Democratic discussions;**
- **Traceable individual preferences;**
- **Results as outcome.**

Let's see how

NY “Listening to the City”, July 2002

4300 people to draw the future of Lower Manhattan after 9/11 (Courtesy of Amerikaspeaks)

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What is the Town Meeting?

The Town Meeting was born about four hundred years ago in what is now the United States of America, as an expression of direct democracy, a way to involve citizens in a discussion of the country's needs and policies through the organization of public meetings.

Nowadays it has evolved in the electronic Town Meeting (e-TM), combining innovative technologies, as the use of the computer in net and the electronic voting system.

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How the original model works

The electronic Town Meeting is a public meeting (open to registered participants) conducted by a Central Facilitator

In the original model it consists of different work phases that combine:

- **the advantages of discussion in small groups**
- **with those of polling**

Possible adaptations of the model

We have to remind that any technique should be adapted to the local context of intervention . The Region Tuscany has already experienced two different versions.

This means that what you see from this moment on is a scheme that can be modified according to IDEAL-UE project or the local needs of each country.

(e.g.: if one consider the option of polling not relevant for its objectives that is not a problem)

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HYDRO MASTER
1A
2B
3C
4D
5E
6F
7G
8H
0J
10

How to participate

The participants

- **are informed, before the discussion, on the issue under discussion;**
- **discuss, therefore they compare different opinions;**
- **get to know the summary of what has been discussed during the assembly ;**
- **they can express themselves by voting individually.**

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The Discussion

The participants debate in small groups at round tables

- **each group works with a Table Facilitator (a volunteer), who guides the discussion and guarantees that it takes place in a democratic manner;**
- **each table is equipped with a laptop connected to a central server;**
- **the table gets support by a Table Assistant who writes and sends the comments to the Theme Team.**

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Information processing

The comments entered in the laptop are sent to the Theme Team, that

- **reads all the comments arriving from the various tables;**
- **identifies common themes as well outliers (as minority opinions);**
- **presents a summary to the whole assembly;**
- **can extract the questions for the individual voting (variation of the model).**

The expression of individual preferences: voting

Voting is possible with the use of polling keypads (anonymous)

it allows to express a preference among the various alternatives proposed on the screens

after a couple of seconds results are displayed on the maxi screen

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Senti di aver capito qualcosa sui temi discussi oggi? / Do you feel you had a good understanding of the themes discussed today?
1. Sì, molto / Yes, a lot
2. Sì, discretamente / Yes, mostly
3. Sì, ma solo in parte / Yes, partly
4. Poco / Little
5. Molto poco / Very little
6. No / No

First questions are about the participants' profiles (age, gender, profession, provenance, belonging to an organization etc…)

At the end of the day the system can be questioned about the participants' preferences relying on their profile

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For more information visit:

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