ASPG Conference - Parliaments Navigating Disruption in 2019

Using civic technology to engage citizens

Hon Jonathan O'Dea MP
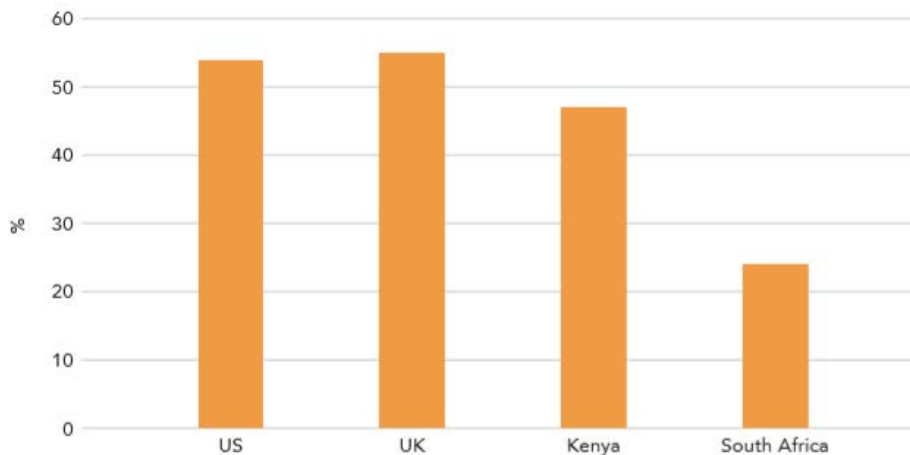Speaker, NSW Parliament

Use of Civic Technology
What is it?

▶ Enables citizen participation and engagement

▶ Facilitates political exchange

▶ Enhances citizen powered democracy

▶ Allows disadvantaged groups to participate in e-democracy

Possible Issues with use

- Entrenches disadvantage for people unable to use the internet?

- Greater state power over citizens?

- A platform for those already politically informed?

Figure 10: Users that previously asked public bodies or representatives for information compared

(Rumbul 2015)

Digital Tools
Citizen Deliberation Software

▶ E-petitions, surveys and online communities where debates take place on policy and budgets

▶ Improving trust in the legitimacy of political institutions

Digital Tools
Where being used?

- Taiwan – 'vTaiwan'
- Belgium – 'OpenWall'
- Spain – 'Decide Madrid'
- Singapore – 'Virtual Singapore'
- Kenya – 'MajiVoice'
- Iceland – 'Betri Reykjavik'
- Estonia – 'Rahvakogu'

Changes in the NSW Legislative Assembly

► Currently livestreams parliamentary proceedings

► Proposed e-petitions

► Public Question during Question Time, may
give MPs opportunity to digitally engage communities

iVote Issues in NSW

- Online remote voting platform for NSW state elections

- In 2015, researchers identified flaws in iVote:

  - Could be used to modify votes without detection

- During the 2019 election:

  - Site crashed and many unable to vote

Cyber Security Attacks

- Attempts by foreign powers to infiltrate elections and governments:

  - Australian federal election in 2019

  - UK Parliament in 2017

  - US election in 2016

  - French election in 2017

A Challenge to Democracy?

- ▶ Foreign actors manipulate democracy through cyber attacks

- ▶ Civic tech can create the façade of citizen powered democracy
  - Moscow's Active Citizen Platform

Conclusion

▶ Civic technology undoubtedly becoming more relevant to more people

▶ Crucial to explore its revolutionary potential influence on the future of democracy