NIOGN Factsheet - Technology & Innovation

An Internet Revolution
Anybody can connect to it. Nobody owns it. And anybody can improve it. The internet makes it easy to find others. And to be connected to others, whether navigating unfamiliar territory or sharing a common interest, is inherently empowering. Because connections often lead to collaboration, and when people do things together, that creates trust and social cohesion; and those things help to create people power.

The rise of open networked communication can move us toward a society where more people have an effective voice and can participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and towards a government that is more open, participatory and accountable. The feeling is that in the same way Napster turned every kid with a computer into a music sharer, the Internet is going to generate a flowering of distributed democracy.

Internet enabled active citizenship
In the networked public sphere, the declining cost of communication coupled with mass connectivity, shifts the balance of power away from money and centralised institutions and toward citizens and non-market values.

Website optimisation can encourage and enable participation, civic capacity and community conversation. The Internet provides a place to engage: share values and creativity; organise together and become players; put new issues on the agenda. Digital technology allows us to engage in a new level of conversation, transforming consultation into something more dynamic, more of a dialogue.

We can have a Dashboard tool that gives supporters & members the ability to connect with friends, organise events, message each other and blog. We can use our blog as a kind of digital watering hole for sharing ideas, inspiration & feedback. We can create online organizing hubs where citizens can press issues of importance & channel suggestions. We can use data & analytics to create a central data hub to understand citizens views on issues of concern.

Action flows out of genuine concern. So to involve people, to encourage a broad array of first time citizen activists, we need to give them a stake & allow them to become players. We need to use technology not just as a net to capture people in our campaign for more open government, but to help them organise, share ideas and create change. We must regard elected representatives as potential champions & partners. And we need to collaborate with groups working on the whole range of community issues.

New technology and the Internet can transform civic life into something far more participatory, transparent & engaging.

E-democracy
E-democracy (a combination of the words electronic and democracy) involves the use of information and communication technologies and strategies in political and governance processes. It aims for more active citizen participation in representative democracy and more participatory or direct forms of citizen involvement in addressing public challenges.

Civic engagement: knowledge, communication, transparency & empowerment
The information capacity available on the Internet allows citizens to become more knowledgeable about government and political issues. The interactivity of the medium allows for new forms of
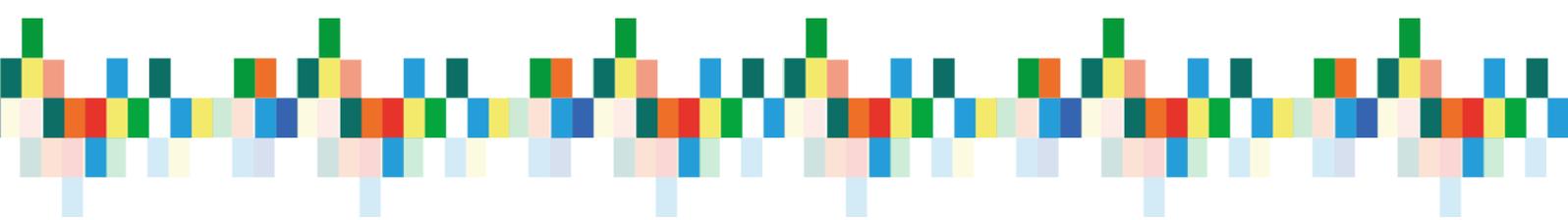
communication with elected officials and public servants. The posting of legislation, agendas, and policies makes government more transparent, potentially enabling more informed participation both online and offline. Whilst the internet empowers individuals, and groups of people by giving interested citizens better access to the information which allows them to impact on public policy. Using online tools to organize, people can more easily be involved in the policy-making process of government, and this has led to increased public engagement.

Collaborative democracy
New ICT creates the opportunity for a government that is simultaneously more democratic and more expert by creating open online collaboration between professionals and the general public.

The challenge
To challenge is to harness technology to provide innovative ways to improve engagement and collaboration. It's about bending technology to serve the end of a more participatory democracy.