

How internet voting redesigns democracy

Claude Bonard
Geneva State Chancellery



Switzerland strong institutional assets

- ❖ **Federal State: *no single decision center***
- ❖ **Swiss people can challenge the MPs' (referendum) and propose new regulations (initiatives): *no strong delegation to MPs***
- ❖ **Remote (postal) voting implemented ten years ago**
- ❖ **We have a network democracy**



Eight successful eVotes to-date

- ❖ **Geneva citizens voted 8 times online since 2003**
- ❖ **Gradual introduction of online voting**
- ❖ **Still in the pilot phase**
- ❖ **22%-25% of ballots cast online**
- ❖ **70% by post**
- ❖ **In 2007, we plan to introduce internet voting as a regular voting way**



eDemocracy: the success of a concept

- ❖ **eDemocracy has become a widespread, yet fuzzy, concept**
- ❖ **Its success express a dissatisfaction with governments**
- ❖ **It underlines the growing gap between citizens and authorities**
- ❖ **Our challenge is to bridge this gap**
- ❖ **Can internet voting help?**



Some raw data

- **Constant: eTurnout averages 22%-25%**
- **Whatever the ballot, this figure is stable**
- **90% fidelity rate**
- **Online voting has a public**



At first sight

- **At first sight, the profile of eVote users is:**
 - ❖ Mostly men under 55 years, with high school or university degree and above-average income
- **No explanatory value in this data: I cannot guess your voting channel based on it**
- **eVoters always voted with the majority**
- **They are evenly divided in left and right**
- **No explanatory value in the political approach either**

What eVote users have in common

• Subjectively

- ❖ They assess positively their own IT skills
- ❖ They trust online information, communication and transactions

• **A new model emerges:
we cannot anymore use
quantifiable data to assess
the citizens' behaviour**



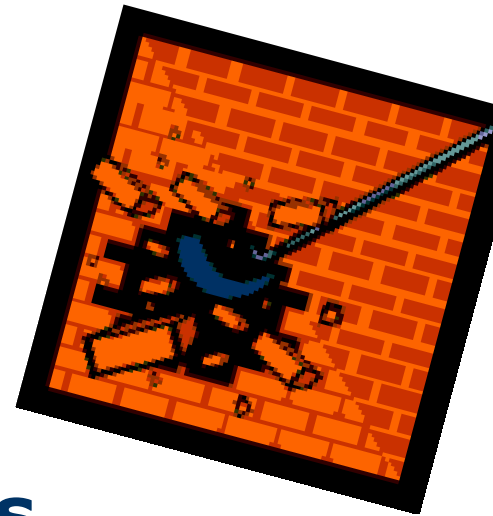
A broken barrier

▶ **While 22%-25% of all voters use internet**

- ❖ 55% of usual abstainers use it
- ❖ 30% of occasional voters use it
- ❖ 19% of regular voters use it

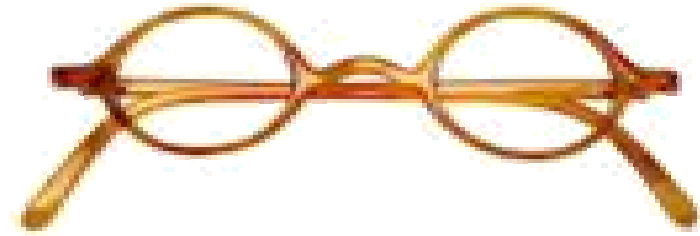
▶ **Online voting breaks
an invisible barrier that keeps
many voters away from politics**

▶ **Since 90% of voters who used once
eVoting keep using it, we can expect a
lasting effect on turnout**



A fresh look at contemporary issues

The divide does not run anymore between the "*connected*" and the "*unconnected*", but between the "*feeling skilled*" and the "*feeling unskilled*"



Our findings show that turnout does not mean retreat into one's private sphere

Just think what a fully-fledged eDemocracy could do!

What's next?

May 2006: the Swiss government proposes a loosening of eVoting rules

June 2006: the Geneva parliament approves the eVoting report

October 2006: the Geneva government presents an eVoting law

eDemocracy is on its way

Thank you for your attention

Visit the project's web site:

www.ge.ch/evoting

Demo web site at:

<https://www.geneve.ch/ge-vote/demo-en/votation.html>

Claude.bonard@etat.ge.ch