Wikis, Weblogs, Podcasts, and E-Government

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Prof. Dr. Andreas Meier

Submitted by
Anja Meier
and
Stefan Jakob-Brand
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ABSTRACT

In industrialised countries, E-Government has been an issue for quite some time. Unfortunately, most governments struggle to fulfil the E-Government policies discharged years ago. While doing so, they are being run over by technological progress and left behind by a growing mass of citizens, businesses, and organisations used to using more and more advanced Information and Communication Technologies. To meet the rising expectations of their stakeholders, some governments attempt to catch up and implement new applications such as wikis, weblogs, and podcasts. Yet, the authors of this paper could only locate a small number of such attempts, and even a smaller number seemed to be beneficial for the respective government and its stakeholders.

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1 INTRODUCTION

„The rise of the information society has led to major changes in [...] organisational structures, cultures, and working processes“ [OECD 2003, p. 11]. As a consequence, today’s governments are confronted by the growing need of their stakeholders to have instant access to information and services, and to participate in political processes through electronic means. With technological progress, expectations of citizens, businesses, organisations, and government agencies towards their governments are growing. Their hope is for E-Government to raise flexibility and accessibility as well as to improve efficiency and means of participation.

1.1 Problem definition

In most governments of industrialized countries, information and communication technologies are well established as a means of providing services and information to or communicating with citizens, businesses, organisations, or amongst government agencies [Brückler/Gisler 2002, p. 5]. While the WorldWideWeb and e-mail services are widely used, there are few examples of governments implementing Web 2.0 applications such as wikis, weblogs, or podcasts. However, these applications may enhance chances of a successful transformation of E-Government policies, especially when it comes to participating in democratic processes or the transparency of those.

1.2 Objective

This paper's objective is first of all to give an overview of E-Government, of what wikis, weblogs and podcasts are, and of what they can be used for. In reference to E-Government, the authors then try to show the potential and the difficulties of these particular tools and present exemplary cases of how they have been implemented by governments.
1.3 Proceed

The first part of this paper contains a review of E-Government and an explanation of how wikis, weblogs and podcast work and how governments and their stakeholders could benefit from the use these tools.

The second part of this paper presents exemplary cases of how wikis, weblogs, and podcasts have been brought into action by governments. It ends with a conclusion on the use of such tools for E-Government.

The findings presented are based on the study of relevant literature and on information from the WorldWideWeb. However, even after thorough research, the authors could not come up with a lot of relevant information on the use of Web 2.0 applications by governments. Therefore, the findings are based on the authors’ thinking and intuition rather than on information in scientific papers.
2 E-GOVERNMENT

2.1 Definitions of E-Government

Definitions of “E-Government“ vary from one country to another, they change over time as government policies and technologies change. A standard definition has jet to be established [Neuroni 2007, p. 33]. However, attempts at defining “E-Government” have been made. The [OECD 2003, p. 23] defines it as: „The use of information and communication technologies, and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government“. This broad interpretation as well as the following definitions clearly emphasizes the government aspect and sees the „E“ as a means to the ends.

The Speyerer definition proposed by [von Lucke/Reinermann 2000, p. 1] is much more precise. It describes E-Government as „[…] die Abwicklung geschäftlicher Prozesse im Zusammenhang mit Regieren und Verwalten (Government) mit Hilfe von Informations- und Kommunikationstechniken über elektronische Medien.“ As can be seen in illustration 1, it further defines E-Government as a process from Government-to-Government (G2G), from Government-to Citizen (G2C), from Government-to-Business (G2B), from Government-to-Non-Profit and from Government-to-Non-Government-Organisations (G2N) on a local, regional, national, supranational, or global level. According to this definition, the whole public sector including legislation, executive, jurisdiction, and public businesses is included. Similar definitions can be found in [Brüchler/Gisler 2002, p. 8] and [Meier/Stormer 2005, p. 223].

Illustration 1: E-Government as a „X2Y“ relation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E-Government</th>
<th>Bevölkerung Bürger</th>
<th>Staat Verwaltung</th>
<th>Zweiter Sektor Wirtschaft</th>
<th>Dritter Sektor NPO/NGO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bevölkerung Bürger</td>
<td>C2C</td>
<td>C2G</td>
<td>C2B</td>
<td>C2N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staat Verwaltung</td>
<td>G2C</td>
<td>G2G</td>
<td>G2B</td>
<td>G2N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dritter Sektor NPO/NGO</td>
<td>N2C</td>
<td>N2G</td>
<td>N2B</td>
<td>N2N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [von Lucke/Reinermann 2000, p. 2]

Illustration 2: Actors and relations in E-Government Switzerland

Source: [in efd 2007a p. 22]

### 2.2 The use of E-Government

The potential use of electronic services for governments and their stakeholders can be split into two categories. The increase in efficiency and affectivity regarding administrative processes is of a general use to most parties involved.\(^1\) A more specific use can be attributed to the application of electronic services for citizens. Here, E-Government can be a means of supporting democratic processes like opinion forming and decision making [Brüchler/Gisler 2002, pp. 9].

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\(^1\) Of course, citizens without access to electronic services cannot benefit of this increase. However, the topic of the digital divide cannot be addressed in this paper.
As can be seen in illustration 3, the field of application for E-Government can be divided into three main areas: E-Assistance describes the electronic support of everyday life through governments, E-Administration refers to the support of internal and external official courses of business, and E-Democracy supplies new means of political participation. In each of these areas, services are offered with a different level of interaction. On the information level, a user may find static and dynamic information. On the communication level, an interactive exchange between people or groups of people may take place. The third level – the transaction level – describes processes of moving goods or furnishing services [Neuroni 2007, p. 38] and [Brüchler/Gisler 2002, pp. 10].

Illustration 3: E-Government matrix with examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaktionsgrad</th>
<th>Transaktion</th>
<th>Kommunikation</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online-Reservation von Räumen (bsp. Turnhallen für Dorffeste)</td>
<td>Formular für - Feedback - Anfragen - Bestellungen - Defekte</td>
<td>Stromspar tips / Verhalten bei Stromausfällen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online Meldewesen/ Online-Steuерklärungen</td>
<td>E-Mail Kontakt zu Behörden / Online-Formulare (Mail)</td>
<td>Informationen zu Bewilligungsverfahren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-Voting</td>
<td>Diskussionsforen zu Abstimmungen und Wahlen</td>
<td>Interpretationen zu politischen Themen, gesetzliche Grundlagen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [Brüchler/Gisler 2002, p. 12].
2.3 E-Government in Switzerland

In January 2007, the E-Government Strategy of Switzerland replaced an older strategy from February 2002. The main targets of the new version are the following: „Ausgehend vom Grundsatz, dass durchgängig elektronische Verwaltungsgeschäfte für Unternehmen, Privatpersonen und die Verwaltung eine Erleichterung dank Bürokratieabbau bedeuten, wurden [für die Schweiz] drei Ziele in der Reihenfolge ihrer Bedeutung definiert:

- Die Wirtschaft wickelt den Verkehr mit den Behörden elektronisch ab.
- Die Behörden haben ihre Geschäftsprozesse modernisiert und verkehren untereinander elektronisch.
- Die Bevölkerung kann die wichtigen, häufigen oder mit großem Aufwand verbundenen Geschäfte mit den Behörden elektronisch abwickeln [efd 2007b].“

These targets may be solid but to the authors, the concept seems devoid of visions. The lack of enthusiasm for a visionary concept might be one of the reasons for the fact that E-Government in Switzerland – compared to all other European countries except for Latvia – shows very little progress in terms of sophistication and online availability [Wauters/Colelough 2006, pp. 8].

Another reason could be that the demand for electronic services in Switzerland is far smaller than the Swiss E-Government community might like. „Wenn die vollständige Transaktion für die Verwaltung und ihre Kundinnen und Kunden kein klares Kosten-Leistungs-Verhältnis zeigt, dann wird sie nicht angeboten [Schedler/Collm/Hristova 2007, p. 44].“ A similar argumentation can be found in [Brüchler/Gisler 2002, p. 6]

A benefit of the more pragmatic progress of E-Government services in Switzerland might be the gain of time needed to come up with strategies for bridging the digital divide. However, whether or not this is true, or what negative consequences might result from a pragmatic approach to E-Government cannot be discussed in this paper.
3 WEB 2.0

A lot of things have changed since Tim Berners-Lee named his famous idea the WorldWideWeb. But this change is not just about technological progress or sinking costs for access and technology. It’s also about the fact that the Web has become a lot more user-friendly, the Web-Community a lot more experienced, and that a rising number of people, businesses, organizations, and governments rely on the use of Internet services on a daily basis [Economist 2006a].

Even if the opposite was intended by its creator, the Web started out as a Read-only-Media. This has dramatically changed in recent times. Today, more people are publishing than ever [Potts 2007]. „Die soziale Komponente, dass die Benutzer von einfachen Lesern zu Mitarbeitern, Mitschöpfern, werden, ist die eigentliche Errungenschaft dessen, was heute manchmal als «Web 2.0» vermarktet wird [Vrandecic/Krötzsch/Völkel 2007 p. 790]. According to [Alby 2007 pp. 1] and [Przepiórka 2006, p.13], Web 2.0 commonly refers to a combination of technologies that have been available since the 1990s but that only recently reached the masses through the proliferation of broad-band access. As illustration 4 implicates, a vital idea of Web 2.0 is to participate, to contribute. Typical Web 2.0 applications are therefore wikis, weblogs, podcasts, video-portals like YouTube, etc.

Illustration 4: Brain-storming on Web 2.0

Source: [Angermeier 2005].“

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The following subsections are dedicated to the explanation of wikis, weblogs, and podcasts as a phenomenon rather than as a part of Information Technology. Therefore, and because of the fact that the frame of this paper doesn’t allow it, explanations on script, architecture, and the setting up of these tools, or on the editing of their contents will not be given.

3.1 Wikis

3.1.1 A brief explanation on wikis

In 1995, Ward Cunningham developed WikiWikiWeb, „[t]he simplest online database that could possibly work“ and the first wiki ever. In reference to the fact that wiki software can help managing and supplying information in a quick and simple way, Cunningham named his creation after the Hawaiian word for „quick“ [Leuf/Cunningham 2002].

The online-encyclopaedia Wikipedia, today’s most famous wiki, defines wikis as follows: „A wiki is a type of computer software that allows users to easily create, edit and link web pages. Wikis are often used to create collaborative websites, power community websites, and are increasingly being installed by businesses to provide affordable and effective Intranets or for use in Knowledge Management [Wikipedia 2007a].“

The target of any wiki is to collect and supply information [Vrandečić/Krötzsch/Völkel 2007 p. 791]. As a database, wikis can be applied to managing knowledge, notes, workflows, etc. According to [Gallenbacher 2007, pp. 32], the main advantages of wikis are:

- the ease with which one can start a wiki by using open-source-software
- the low administration effort necessary to maintain and control a wiki
- the non-hierarchical structure, allowing to search for data by using glossary words and to access other pages through embedded links
- the fact, that conventional browsers can be used for navigation, reading and editing
• the uniform, user-friendly representation
• the simplicity of search- and editing-functions allowing most people to use a wiki and to contribute to its evolution

When it comes to identifying disadvantages, vandalism is a small issue, fortunately [Ebersbach/Glaser/Heigl 2005, p. 29]. Today, the contents of a wiki are stored most often in a relational database running on one or several web-servers. This allows wikis to keep a complete history of all their pages. Changes can therefore be observed, and in case of vandalism, the previous version can be easily restored [Brännström/Martenson 2006].

Disadvantages of wikis are the recurring appearance of misleading, false, or even illegal contents.³ Only a large number of contributing members can make sure that they disappear again after a short time. In comparison, with a small number of users, false information is likely to remain undetected for a longer period of time. Therefore, the administration effort invested into controlling is likely to rise [Gallenbacher 2007, pp. 32]. A similar argumentation can be found in [Ebersbach/Glaser/Heigl 2005, pp. 13] and in [Alby 2007, pp. 88].

Wikis can be used by a restricted group of people such as the employees of a company, the members of an organization, the citizens of a country, or they can be an open source and as such accessible and editable by anyone who has access to the WorldWideWeb [Ebersbach/Glaser/Heigl 2005, pp. 10].

Generally speaking, wiki-software is open-source software and can therefore be downloaded for free. Probably the most popular wiki package these days is MediaWiki. The software was originally written for Wikipedia and so far has regularly been updated [MediaWiki 2007]. One advantage of MediaWiki is the fact that a large number of users are familiar with the software and know how to work with it. Other popular wikis are MoinMoin, UseModWiki etc.⁴

⁴ On http://www.wikimatrix.org a large number of wiki-systems is shown and can be compared.
But because wikis are a successful tool within the web-community, and because even companies such as SAP, Web.de, Motorola or British Telecom use wikis as an intranet [Ebersbach/Glaser/Heigl 2005, p. 12], the question arises if wikis could also be used in E-Government processes.

3.1.2 Potentials and difficulties of wikis for E-Government

Wikis could be useful in internal (G2G) as well as in external (G2C, G2B, G2N) E-Government processes. Possible applications range from internal coordination, knowledge and project management to participation in political processes of opinion identification. However, very little information can be found on the topic. In their book [Ebersbach/Glaser/Heigl 2005, p. 13] write: „Die Anwendungsmöglichkeiten von Wikis zur Selbstorganisation privater wie öffentlicher Organisationen und Betriebe müssen noch erprobt und diskutiert werden.“ A similar line of thought can be found in [Jahnke/Schaller 2007, pp. 68].

E-mails to a number of specialists in the field either remained unanswered or failed to turn up relevant studies or information on E-Government applications of wikis, weblogs or podcasts.5

Brännström and Martenson's paper on a Military-Wiki Knowledge Base might loosely be connected to E-Government. Its purpose is „to study how a wiki system can be used for knowledge management in everyday use across hierarchies and boundaries in a military organization [Brännström/Martenson 2006].“ However, whether or not this is a typical E-Government application may be debated.

One reason for this lack of interest for and lack of information about Web 2.0 applications in relation to E-Government might well be the fact that they are fairly new to E-Government representatives. Nevertheless, it seems strange to the authors that little scientific research seems to have been done in the area. At the same time, most European governments seem to show considerable difficulties in the transformation of their E-Government policies, even on a relatively low

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5 These e-mails can be forwarded to interested readers on demand.
level [Stobbe 2007]. It might well be that a lot of research-effort is going into the study and the solving of such problems. However, given the timeframe and the target of this paper, the authors are simply unable to answer such questions.

Wikis as applications for E-Government are increasingly being discussed in connection with semantic webs [Brännström/Martenson 2006]. The European Union promotes a wiki-project with the target of “providing Integrated Public Services to Citizens at the National and Pan-European level with the use of Emerging Semantic Web Technologies [SemanticGov 2006].“ However, Semantic webs are too large a topic to be discussed in this paper.

3.2 Weblogs

3.2.1 A brief explanation on weblogs

The term weblog is an artificial construction formed of the terms Web and logbook. [Przepiorka 2006, pp. 14] defines a blog⁶ as being „[…] eine häufig aktualisierte Webseite, auf der Inhalte jeglicher Art in chronologisch absteigender Form angezeigt werden. Ein Weblog kann typischerweise die Form eines Tagebuches, eines Journals, einer What’s-New-Page oder einer Linksammlung zu anderen Webseiten annehmen.“ An author or a group of authors edit the content of the blog at the same time linking it to other blogs and websites. Readers can comment on the content and thereby contribute to the evolution of the blog. Similar definitions can be found in [Schonschek/Mayer 2007, p. 282] and [Olbertz 2004 pp. 7] and [Alby 2007, p. 21].

As this definition implies, blogs can be simple online diaries. The average reader’s incentive to visit such blogs is to participate in someone else's life and history. At the same time, this definition is broad enough to include the fact that blogs can be a lot more than just diaries. According to [Schonschek/Mayer 2007, p. 282] and [Alby 2007, p. 21], special blogs – some of them academic, others political, some others related to business, and then again others being purely private initiatives etc. – discuss various subjects, such as:

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⁶ The term blog is an abbreviation of the term weblog
• watchblogs ➔ are observing politics, certain companies, and the media
• litblogs ➔ discuss authors and literature
• corporate blogs ➔ are being edited by companies
• blawgs ➔ concern themselves with legal matters
• warblogs ➔ discuss wars and media reporting on wars
• moblog ➔ the blog is edited on the go

Really Simple Syndication- or RSS-Readers help users to keep on top of all modifications in a selected blog. They constantly check for changes and automatically download new contents. This is a lot easier than manually checking all blogs for updates. Users may usually subscribe to such services by clicking on RSS icons [Wikipedia 2007b].

As social software, weblogs have a lot of advantages compared to static websites. They are very quick to install, edit, and maintain media. They are easy to handle, even for laymen. They can mostly be downloaded for free and be used wherever the Web can be accessed [Przepiorka 2006, pp. 16].

However, weblogs also have a number of disadvantages. Since most people tend to share more information than they intend to, weblogs quite often are a mirror image of their (sometimes very) personal opinion or offer information on companies, employers, other people, etc., not intended for the public. Such information can be held against an author on a legal level, in a business situation, in a job-interview, etc. At the same time, weblogs and especially moblogs, can be an almost instant source of information. However, this information reflects personal opinions and observations rather than thorough journalistic research work. [Przepiorka 2006, pp. 16] Through extensive linking to other blogs, tarnished or false information can quickly become very popular to search-engines and thus, in some cases, a major threat to the image of the person, organisation or business concerned. „Die potentielle Gefahr durch das neue Blog-Medium hat bereits zur Bildung von Unternehmen geführt, die ihre Dienste zur Überwachung der Blogosphäre anbieten, um frühzeitig vor kritischen Beiträgen warnen zu können [Schonschek/Mayer 2007, pp. 283].“ A similar argumentation can be found in [Wolff 2006, pp. 55].
According to [Verigo 2007] in June 2007, more than 70 million weblogs existed worldwide, and 120'000 were added to this number every day since. The popularity of weblogs leads to the question if governments and their stakeholders could benefit by using them.

3.2.2 Potentials and difficulties of weblogs for E-Government

As in the case of wikis, the authors of this paper were unable to find free scientific papers on the use of weblogs in reference to E-Government. However, weblogs could certainly be used as a means of quick and direct exchange of information, experiences, or thoughts between governments and responding groups such as citizens, businesses, organisations, or other government agencies. Specific blogs on different governmental levels could be dedicated to discussing particular problems such as traffic, pollution, health-care, social-welfare, etc., and to finding solutions to solve them.

Being a popular tool within the Web-Community, blogs might allow for an increase of participation in political processes. At least, governments could benefit from an immediate feel for the opinion within the blogosphere. But as for example [Koch 2007] states, most „Bürgermeister-blogs” in Germany are being hopelessly neglected by their authors.

In Switzerland as well as abroad, weblogs have been used by politicians for quite some time. A quick search for the blogs of the main Swiss political parties, executed on November 16th, 2007, showed that some of them were last updated a month before: SVP (15.10.07), SP (17.10.07), FDP (19.10.07), CVP (30.10.07), Greens (1.11.07) [NZZ 2007]. Even if these blogs cannot be taken as an example of E-Government, they are an example of how unimportant a tool weblogs are being considered as by politicians.

However, the power of the blogosphere can no longer be ignored, neither by businesses, nor by governments. This fact is represented by an increasing number of examples of which some can be found in [Röttger/Zielmann 2006, pp. 36].
3.3 Podcasts

3.3.1 A brief explanation on podcasts

The first podcast scripts were developed for automatic transformation of an audio-file to Apple’s iPod, after having been downloaded from the Internet. Thanks to that, the term podcast as a fusion of the name of this mobile device and the term broadcast was created [Walter 2006, p.17].

Being a relatively new linguistic creation, the term was crowned „Word of the year 2005“ by the New Oxford American Dictionary for its phenomenal rise from total unknownness to being in everyone’s mouth. The term podcast, defined as "a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program, made available on the Internet for downloading to a personal audio player," was added to the New Oxford American Dictionary in early 2006 [Oxford University Press 2005].

When in the beginning, podcasting – the production of podcasts – was mainly an occupation of amateurs, podcasts these days are increasingly being produced by professionals like the music industry, radio stations, companies, organisations, schools, and universities, etc. [Alby 2007, pp. 73].

As in the case of wikis and blogs, podcasts can easily be downloaded and listened to or be produced by using free software, downloadable from the Internet. The advantage of podcasts is the fact that they can be listened to whenever and wherever one wants to do so – presupposing one has downloaded an audio file from the Internet and transferred it to one’s mobile device. But not only podcasts have become very popular, also the number of vodcasts – video-files – is increasing. However, pod- or vodcasts are not as social or as interactive a media as wikis or weblogs [Economist 2006c].

But again, since the popularity of pod- and vodcasts is growing, the question arises if these tools could be beneficial to all parties involved in some E-Government processes.
3.3.2 Potentials and difficulties of podcasts for E-Government

Even if pod- and vodcasts generally could be defined as being popular, they are not so in reference to E-Government. To the authors of this paper, this seems unfortunate since – according to their views – a lot of people involved could benefit from the supply of such files. Possible applications could be audio or video documentation of public meetings in parliaments, of speeches of government representatives, of explanations on votes, etc. This would allow government stakeholders who cannot attend to such happenings, to have easy access to such information. Using pod- and vodcasts in E-Government could therefore increase the level of transparency of governmental processes and the level of individual participation in democratic processes.
4 PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Despite the fact that these days an enormous amount of wikis, weblogs, and podcasts can be found on the Web, there seem to be few interesting or even successful implementations of such tools by governments. However, examples of projects seeming interesting to the authors of this paper will be presented in the following subsections.

4.1 Wikis in New Zealand and in Karlsruhe (Germany)

4.1.1 The Police act wiki in New Zealand

Since New Zealand’s current Police Act was determined for a revision, a wiki was installed in September 2007. This allowed the global community (not just the New Zealanders) to suggest wording for the new Policing Act. It generated an overwhelming response and covered topics “from high-level governance to day-to-day administration.” All suggestions were consolidated by the Police Act Review team, and by October 1st, 2007 the resulting wiki Act, along with information from traditional consultation channels, was fed into the parliamentary law-making process [Police Act Review 2007].

When asked by the Sydney Morning Herald, Superintendent Hamish McCardle, the officer responsible for the initiative, said: “It's a novel move but when it comes to the principles that go into policing, the person on the street has a good idea ... as they are a customer. They've got the best idea about how they want to be policed [Ramachandran 2007].

4.1.2 The city-wiki of Karlsruhe (Germany)

Even if this wiki is a private initiative started in July 2004, it clearly shows one potential application of a wiki-tool for E-Government. The Karlsruher city-

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7 Extensive discussions about this initiative can be found on the blogosphere and in a lot of articles on the Web.
wiki provides all sorts of information for citizens, businesses, organizations, tourists, and a special portal for people who newly come to live in the area. Within three years, this wiki has become the largest city-wiki of the world, currently containing more than 13’600 articles [Karlsruher Stadt-Wiki 2007].

4.2 The Blog of Moritz Leuenberger

To the authors of this paper, the Swiss Bundesrat’s blog is a suitable example of the frequent misunderstanding of intention and potential of these tools. The blog is being updated about every seven days, is hardly linked to other blogs or sources of information, but seems popular amongst citizens nevertheless. Tim’s comment from November 15th 2007, sums it all up: „Leute für was schreibt ihr den noch hier? Der Herr Leuenberger führt hier ein Tagebuch […], er schreibt sowieso nie was dazu [Leuenberger 2007].“ So, even if Mister Leuenberger is the only Swiss Bundesrat with a blog, the question arises if that is of any use to anyone!

Numerous blogs of politicians holding governmental positions can be found throughout the blogosphere. Unfortunately, the authors of this paper could find no such blogs with a different approach than Leuenbergers. At the same time, they were unable to locate different examples of use of blogs that could be linked to E-Government.

4.3 The Economy-Vodcast of the city of Mainz (Germany)

In June 2006, the „Wirtschaftsförderung“ of the city of Mainz started a vodcast-initiative on economy. Franz Ringhoffer, one of the government representatives explains: „Zielgruppe sind in erster Linie Mainzer Wirtschaftstreibende, die auf unterhaltsame und doch hochwertige Art regelmäßig über die monatlichen Wirtschaftsnews in Mainz informiert werden möchten [eGovernment Computing 2006].“ However, after a testphase of six months, the vodcasting was stopped without further comment [Mainz 2006] and [Mainz 2007].

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8 The 25 largest city-wikis are being presented and briefly compared on: http://www.omahawiki.org/Omaha_Wiki:Omaha_Wiki_Benchmarks
5 PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

To be able to better understand the above explained applications, but most of all to check out, if the use of these applications is really as easy as mentioned everywhere, the authors decided to try and co-edit articles in Wikipedia as well as to open up a weblog. However, they did not have a go at podcasting.

5.1 Working with Wikipedia

After creating a Wikipedia account, the authors of this paper visited the introductions and learned some basics of Wikipedia. Thereby, the sandbox turned out to be a helpful instrument. Here, everything learned in the wiki-tutorials can be applied to text without danger to any existing articles. To the surprise of the authors, it was quite easy to add text to existing articles, to link names in articles to existing articles or to existing web-sites, etc. However, it is more difficult to add pictures to Wikipedia since the source of the picture has to be transparent, and the copyright/licence tag has to be included or the picture has to come from a public domain.

The authors of this paper didn’t attempt to write a new article since, after some thought, it would not have been an improvement to Wikipedia. However, it did not seem very difficult since a lot of templates can be used and since a lot of assistance is provided through links to according pages.

5.2 Creating a Seminar-Blog

As an experiment accompanying the eHealth/eGovernment-Seminar at the University of Fribourg, the authors of this paper created their own „Seminar-Blog.“9 Setting up the blog didn’t take too long and was as easy as mentioned everywhere. Help from a detailed menu was available at every step of the process. However, the actual blogging, not the rate of the set up is crucial to the quality of a blog.10

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9 Available from November 30th, to December 15th, 2007 at http://blog-seminar.blogspot.com
10 Further explanations to the practical experiences will be given at the presentation of this paper.
6 CONCLUSION

„In ihrer heutigen Gestalt dienen Apparate wie das Fernsehen oder der Film nicht der Kommunikation sondern ihrer Verhinderung. Sie lassen keine Wechselwirkung zwischen Sender und Empfänger zu: technisch gesprochen, reduzieren sie den Feedback auf das systemtheoretisch mögliche Minimum [Enzensberger 1997, S. 99].“ This, while still being a fact for radio, television, and for most contents on the Internet, has dramatically changed with the rise of Web 2.0 applications. These applications allow anyone with an Internet access to create or to participate in the creation of contents and to place them to the debate of the entire Web-Community.

If this change also includes an emancipation of the masses, remains to be seen. As [Enzensberger 1997, S. 98] says: „Das offenbare Geheimnis der elektronischen Medien, das entscheidende politische Moment, das bis heute unterdrückt oder verstümmelt auf seine Stunde wartet, ist ihre mobilisierende Kraft.“ But what has come from this power so far are a number of exceptional projects like Wikipedia, and innumerable interesting, moderately interesting, bad, or terrible expressions of opinion and attempts of being creative, that few people even bother to look at.

In this creative mess, governments attempt to copy exceptional projects and try to set them up to be beneficial for themselves and their stakeholders. However, having limited budgets, other interests or targets, often little knowledge in the field, etc. most governments struggle to transfer their E-Government policies into action. Still mainly occupied with the implementation of E-Assistance, most governments seem to have been run over by technological progress. Anyhow, successful Web 2.0 applications implemented by governments are difficult to find, despite their potential use to all parties involved.

At the same time, the more pragmatic approach of governments to Web 2.0 applications seems quite reasonable if one calls into memory that so far, every hype has had its peak and that afterwards, a more reasonable approach was possible. At this stage, it seems that everyone involved could benefit from a little careful thinking and from some research in the area. Of course, it would
be best for all parties involved if governments would adequately involve all stakeholders in these research and development processes. A similar line of thinking can be found in the [N Kamel Boulos/Maramba/Weeler 2006] study on collaborative clinical practice and education.
REFERENCES


[von Lucke/Reinermann 2000] von Lucke, Jörn; Reinermann, Heinrich:


