

## **FROM PARTICIPATION TO E-PARTICIPATION: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT E-PARTICIPATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?**

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### **Introdução**

This paper examines e-participation at the local level, analyzing the shift from traditional to digital participation. Focusing on participation practices, it aims to understand what we know about the transition to e-participation. To this end, a literature review and content analysis were conducted to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding e-participation dynamics.

### **Problema de Pesquisa e Objetivo**

The research problem of this study is: What do we know about e-participation at the local level? The study aims to understand how technological advancements and recent global events, have transformed citizen participation into e-participation in the local context. The objective is to identify categories, structures, barriers, challenges, and benefits of e-participation, highlighting its potential to enhance democratic engagement and inclusivity and the obstacles faced, such as digital divides and institutional resistance.

### **Fundamentação Teórica**

The theoretical foundation of this paper begins with participation theories, focusing on various levels of citizen engagement, from non-participation to full citizen power. The evolution of democratic practices emphasizes the importance of citizen involvement in decision-making, which aligns with modern e-participation models. This study aims to bridge the gap between traditional participatory theories and contemporary e-participation practices, providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics and impacts of e-participation on local governance.

### **Discussão**

The findings reveal a complex landscape of e-participation at the local level, characterized by both significant potential and notable challenges. One of the most prominent benefits of e-participation is its ability to enhance democratic engagement and inclusivity. However, the study also highlights barriers. The digital divide remains a critical issue, as disparities in access to technology and digital literacy can exclude certain population segments, particularly in marginalized communities. It highlights the need for local governments to invest in technology and digital literacy.

### **Conclusão**

The results reveal that while e-participation offers significant potential to enhance democratic engagement and inclusivity, it also faces substantial challenges, such as digital divides, institutional resistance, and the need for robust technological infrastructure. By following the best practices and lessons learned from the literature in this paper, local governments can create effective e-participation platforms that increase democratic engagement and foster a more inclusive and responsive governance system.

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