**Challenges to the introduction of e-Participation and digital democracy in Switzerland in a sociological and cultural perspective**

**Summary**

The arrival of new technologies in the public sector and the connected re-definition of ways public administrations interact with citizens is currently a burning topic. Despite numerous research projects exploring the introduction of electronic government (e-Government) from the citizens’ perspective, insights on the topic from the point of view of public officials and politicians stay vastly unexplored. The objective of the PhD project is to respond to this gap. By evaluating the influence of factors such as the political tradition, institutional system or organisational culture, we aim to explain the relative underdevelopment of electronic participation (e-Participation) and digital democracy tools in Switzerland. Despite the excellent potential that Swiss authorities have at their disposal in this regard, the level of e-Participation development ranks the country far behind the leaders in the field. The main outcomes of the present research will be, in the first place, exposure of principal problematic points connected to the aforementioned factors that impact on the comparative immaturity of e-Participation instruments in Switzerland and, secondly, suggestions of solutions that could open a way towards the further advancement of digital democracy. The empirical part of the research will be based on the analysis of data obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with politicians, public officials and technological experts working in or collaborating with the Swiss federal administration.

**Keywords**

e-Participation, e-Government, digital democracy, citizen empowerment, citizen-centric government, organisational culture, sociology of organisations, direct democracy, civic engagement