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Political experimentation using ICT's in Europe: Successes and failures in the roll-out of e-voting

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Over the last decade European democracies have conducted numerous trials with a wide range of ICT enabled forms of novel political experimentation. To this end, Europe's diverse political landscape offers us a rare political laboratory for examining the potential impact of varying institutional structures and political cultures on distinct forms of so-called e-democratic experimentation. This is especially the case with regard to a number of recent e-voting trials. This paper adopts a comparative public policy perspective to investigate the problems in adopting e-voting mechanisms across a number of European states. The main conclusion derived is that institutional and political culture variables significantly impact on e-voting outcomes. In connection with the bigger picture on e-democratic experimentation, this paper argues that a focus on smaller scale forms of political experimentation, such as e-voting, can also help overcome certain methodological difficulties related to undertaking cross-national comparative analyses. To the extent that this is done, we are more likely to ensure that comparable phenomena are actually being compared.