

CAN **CIVIC TECH** SAVE DEMOCRACY?

How technology is renewing
civic engagement



Acknowledgment

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About L'Atelier BNP Paribas

With its prospective vision and extensive experience in understanding the digital economy, L'Atelier BNP Paribas is strategically placed to help the BNP Paribas Group and its clients succeed their digital transformation.

Part of the BNP Paribas Group for more than 35 years, L'Atelier BNP Paribas is unique by its open architecture approach that extends beyond the banking sector, and its presence in three major geographical areas that are key drivers for innovation with offices in Paris, San Francisco & Shanghai.

The following study is designed for two uses:

- As an overview of the new technologies and services built to enhance civic engagement to help better understand the issues, impact and remaining challenges of this new ecosystem.
- As a practical guide to the new digital tools that could help citizens engage with any civic and political organization, including governments, nonprofits, and activists.

After the presentation of civic technologies in its wider aspect from a US perspective, this report will be narrowing the ecosystem to the new solutions aimed at improving citizen engagement.


We hope this study will be the start of a dialogue among civic enthusiasts, empowering anyone interested in the civic tech field with important insights to understand the current landscape as we see it, and to inspire those seeking to transform citizen engagement and our current democratic system.

L'Atelier BNP Paribas, December 2017

“ Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. ”

Thomas Ehrlich, Consulting Professor at Stanford, 2000

CAN CIVIC TECH SAVE DEMOCRACY?



How technology is renewing civic engagement

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Introduction

Today's engagement challenges

In modern societies, citizens have a plurality of choices to get involved, fulfill their civic engagement, and make a difference in their community. Civic organizations, as instrumental parts of this engagement, have existed and grown, for much longer than computer technologies, under a variety of forms: Academic institutions, NGOs, political parties, cooperatives, think tanks or simply public forums.

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS IN THE US



1.57M organizations
in the US, including
1.1M public charities
105K private foundations



Within the US adult
population,
25% volunteer
in an organization
11.3% are employed



The nonprofit sector
contributed a
\$905.9B to the
US economy
representing
5.4% of its GDP

Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas 2017 from National Center for Charitable Statistics¹

Civic organizations are important stakeholders that help support public institutions - whether a city, state or country. Every small form of civic engagement, no matter how small, can hinder public sector effectiveness.

Therefore, it is important for these institutions to interact with civil society and leverage its role as a communication facilitator, research intermediary, and innovation maker, to maintain alignment with the needs and desire of citizens and specific communities.

Democracy relies on old technologies that limit citizen engagement

Although citizen engagement is tremendously important to maintain and grow a healthy civil society and public sector, traditional methods of citizen engagement cannot thoroughly fulfill this objective.

As an example, more than 136 million people voted during the last American presidential elections which is roughly 57% of the total voting population. It is impossible for all of them to express their concerns to the candidates. This physical technological limitation has historically thwarted public participation leading to three main issues: a lack of mobilization and representation of the citizens, and a lack of attention by both citizens and public administrations.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT ISSUES



MOBILIZATION

Citizens don't want to express themselves



REPRESENTATION

Citizens don't identify to the elected



ATTENTION

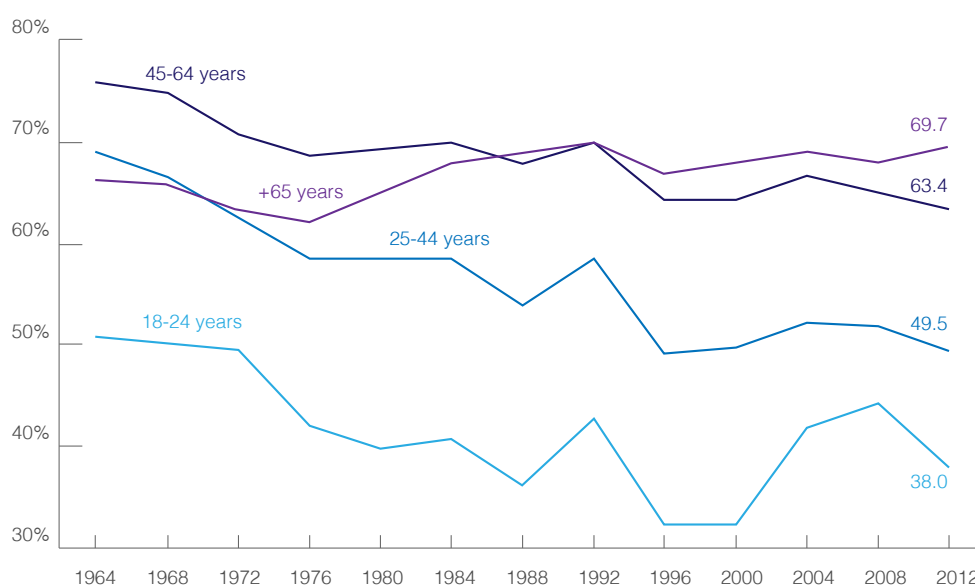
Citizens are not feeling heard

Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas 2017

It is no secret that the number of people voting at every election is dropping. Although it is not obvious in a short timeframe, the difference with decades ago is visible. More than a mere lack of interest, this shows that voters are just feeling less represented by their politicians than before. In the U.S., more than 40% of the population now considers itself as independent politically.

MOBILIZATION CHALLENGE:

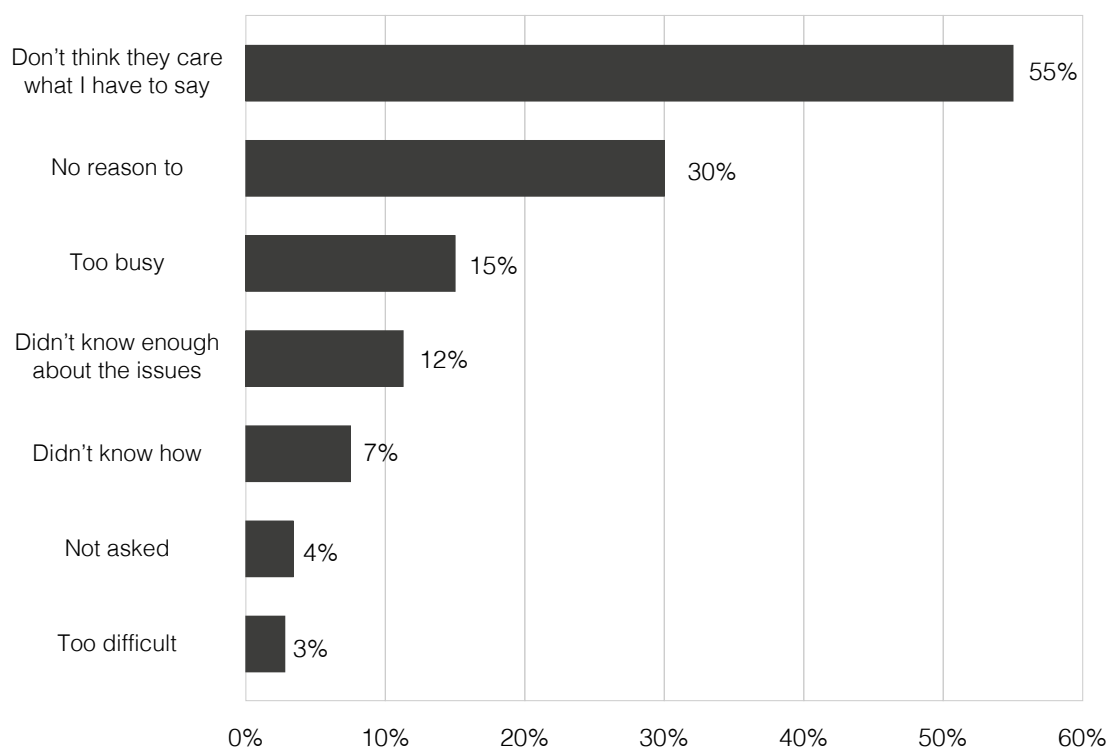
VOTING RATES OVER TIME FOR THE VOTING-AGE POPULATION



Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas 2017 adapted from the US Census Bureau²

REPRESENTATION CHALLENGE:*US PARTY IDENTIFICATION*Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas 2017 adapted from Gallup³

But even if citizens were correctly represented, an attention issue remains. As an example, half of Internet users who did not contact Congress said the reason they did not do so was that they felt that their representatives do not care about what they have to say.

ATTENTION CHALLENGE:*REASONS WHY INTERNET USERS DID NOT CONTACT CONGRESS*Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas adapted from the Congressional Management Foundation⁴

“ We are 21st-century citizens, doing our very, very best to interact with 19th century-designed institutions that are based on an information technology of the 15th century. ”

Pia Mancini, Democracy OS, 2014

Our system is relying on a 500 years old technology that needs high resources to function in terms of funding, or volunteering.⁵ That inefficiency inherently slows down massive engagement. More importantly, its functioning processes (centralized and with one-way interactions) are completely opaque and do not center around a key user, the citizen.

Frustration resulting from the combination of those two factors leads to two different behaviors: silence (passive citizens) or noise (a lack of coherent debate). In the end, citizens are reducing their behavior range in the democratic debate, and the number of engagement methods is decreasing.

“ We’re living through a crisis of mainstream politics. Political parties have lost millions of members since the 1950s and underlying this is an enormous deficit of trust. At the same time, however, there has been a rise in the number of protest movements around the world – a surge in the number of people voicing their opinions on the streets, in online petitions and via Facebook campaigns. ”

Carl Miller, Research Director at Demos, 2015

The Internet has created easier ways to mobilize people

If the Internet in the U.S. has been associated with a very specific population of wealthy, highly-educated white males, it is no longer the case. As of 2016, 87% of all American adults are Internet users.⁶ The spectrum of uses is increasing and covering tasks that used to be offline. And for the population, expanding those online services is not only a desire but an expectation.

In particular, there are improved and brand new tools for citizen organizations and outreach online. All the different levels of citizen engagement now cost less money, energy and time, whether access to information to build an opinion, debate with your network, donate to a party or contact elected people to engage.

Historically, the most popular game-changing use was a new communication channel. Citizens around the world are building collective intelligence and engagement platforms by using digital media like Twitter, YouTube, or Facebook. A great example of this phenomenon has been the Black Lives Matter movement since 2013, using social platforms to collect information, share opinions and organize actions with limited human, financial and temporal resources.

If leveraged efficiently, social networks can become central to the strategy of a civic organization.



During his 2012 campaign, Obama gained
23M Twitter followers & 45M Facebook fans
\$690M were raised by digital means, over half of his total budget

Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas adapted from Quarterly⁷

The network effect social platforms can create is so powerful that when it comes to civic engagement, digital effort is often reduced to them. But they cannot be sufficient for the population. As an example, one of the public issue that raised the most activity from the U.S. population in the last few years is Edward Snowden's 2013 revelations about government surveillance, which remarkably divided the population in half about the leaked policy itself.⁸ Surveys on population reported that People were less willing to discuss the Snowden-NSA story in social media than they were in person. More than 80% of Americans were willing to have an in-person conversation about the surveillance program, but just 40% of Facebook and Twitter users were willing to post about it on those platforms.⁹ The implicit social rules around social networks are reducing the possibilities.

In fact, as an example, Facebook discovered that 70% of its users exhibited some level of last-minute self-censorship, providing specific evidence supporting the theory that a user's "perceived audience" lies at the heart of the issue.¹⁰

By disrupting all the processes that lead to the empowerment of citizen and their engagement, new technologies can bring a change of paradigm to the table for civil societies.

This movement of civic technologies is commonly called "Civic tech". It has grown in the U.S. and especially in Silicon Valley because of the cultural habit of addressing the issues of any sector by making bridges with new technologies. It has brought many new tools to tackle the challenges of the civic organizations and proposes new ways to push the voice of the people to their governments, representatives and deliver new way to engage individuals.

WHERE IS CIVIC TECH?



Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas adapted from Microsoft Civic Center¹¹

1. The US civic tech ecosystem

1.1 | Overview of the movement

History of civic tech in the last decade: Obama's Open Government Initiative in 2009 and its consequences

During the last 10 years and before Barack Obama's presidency, a new trend for an "open government" slowly grew, led by non-profit organizations like the Sunlight Foundation and Open Knowledge International. The purpose was straightforward: openness to citizen participation and engagement in policymaking and governance, including basic protections for civil liberties. With the complexity of today's society, citizen inputs are critical to narrow the gap between the people and the microcosm of the elected elite. Unless citizens are empowered to better understand and contribute to policy-making, mistrust towards political representatives can only lead to frustration and silence. Sunlight Foundation initiated transparency projects even before Obama's administration with OpenCongress.org in 2007, a site that tracks the entire legislation text and builds a community following closely congressional activities and pushing its experiments up to the institutions.

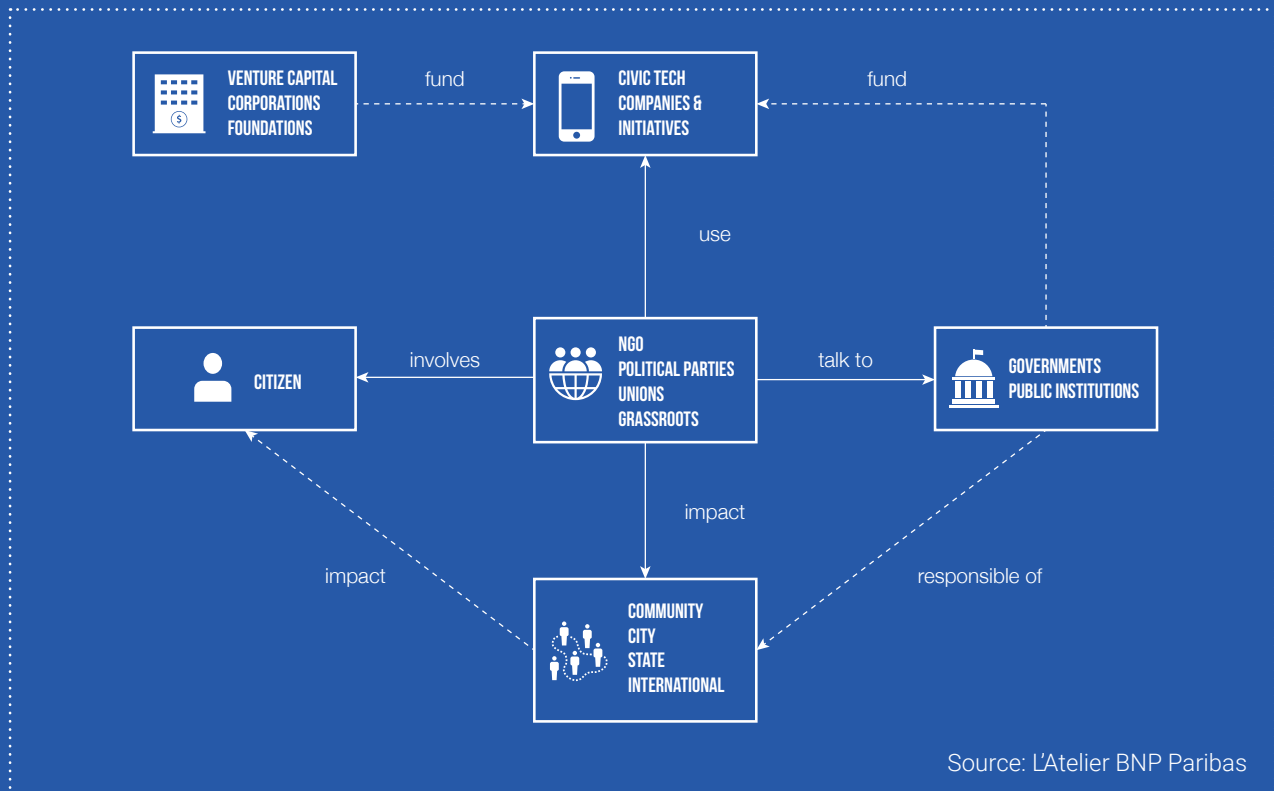
Barack Obama presidency marked a tipping point in government support by making open government a high priority with 3 initiatives launched on his first day in office in 2009, aimed to promote transparency, participation, and collaboration with the government.

- Freedom of Information Act, stating on a "presumption of disclosure" aimed at all executive departments and agencies that Obama insisted on. In extension to this were initiated the disclosure of federal spending decisions and the declassification of voluminous sensitive information that should no longer be kept a secret to the public.
- Open Government Directive, establishing Open Government Web pages and asking the public to come forward with ideas and suggestions
- Data.gov updated, providing the public with access to thousands of agency data sets that can be downloaded and manipulated by anyone from academic researchers to data developers.

The idea was that the more citizens have access to the way government works, the more they become invested in what it does, leading to actions of common interest, a clear check, and balance status.

This full support from the government was a key help for the emergence of a new wave of civic tech that shaped what the movement is today by publicly acknowledging the benefits of new technologies in democracy and by providing the necessary tools for entrepreneurs to build new services based on the leverage of agencies' data. It helped build the reputation of many civic tech players at the time.

Who are the actors of the ecosystem?



Venture Capital

Traditional venture capital firms looking at companies disrupting new markets with high returns got very interested in civic tech. Andreessen Horowitz invested for example in Amicus, a company helping organizations to get more donors, members and votes.

Impact Investors

Impact investors invest with the goal of creating social impact instead of only having an opportunistic purpose. Omidyar Network, created by eBay's founder, has committed more than \$992 million in investments and grants to civic engagement or govtech startups and nonprofit organizations.

Large Tech Corporations

With their culture of agility and customer-focus approach, tech companies were natural candidates for help. They multiplied their starting point of help, and are not offering financial help only through foundations like traditional companies but leverage their expertise and technological resources with specialized business units to help launch new initiatives. For example, Facebook unveiled this year a new feature called "Town Hall" which enables social network users to easily locate, follow and contact their local, state and federal government representatives.

Foundations

By their number, and the amount of grants they give for civic and ethical projects with no financial objective, foundations are playing an important role in the ecosystem. Beyond the historical role of big corporations or rich individuals such as the Ford Foundation, some focused on civic tech like Knight Foundation, which contributed to popularize the main values such as transparency and open data.

Cities and Governments

The Administration has recently started experimenting by funding new governance models to run programs that could deliver innovation at a department level.

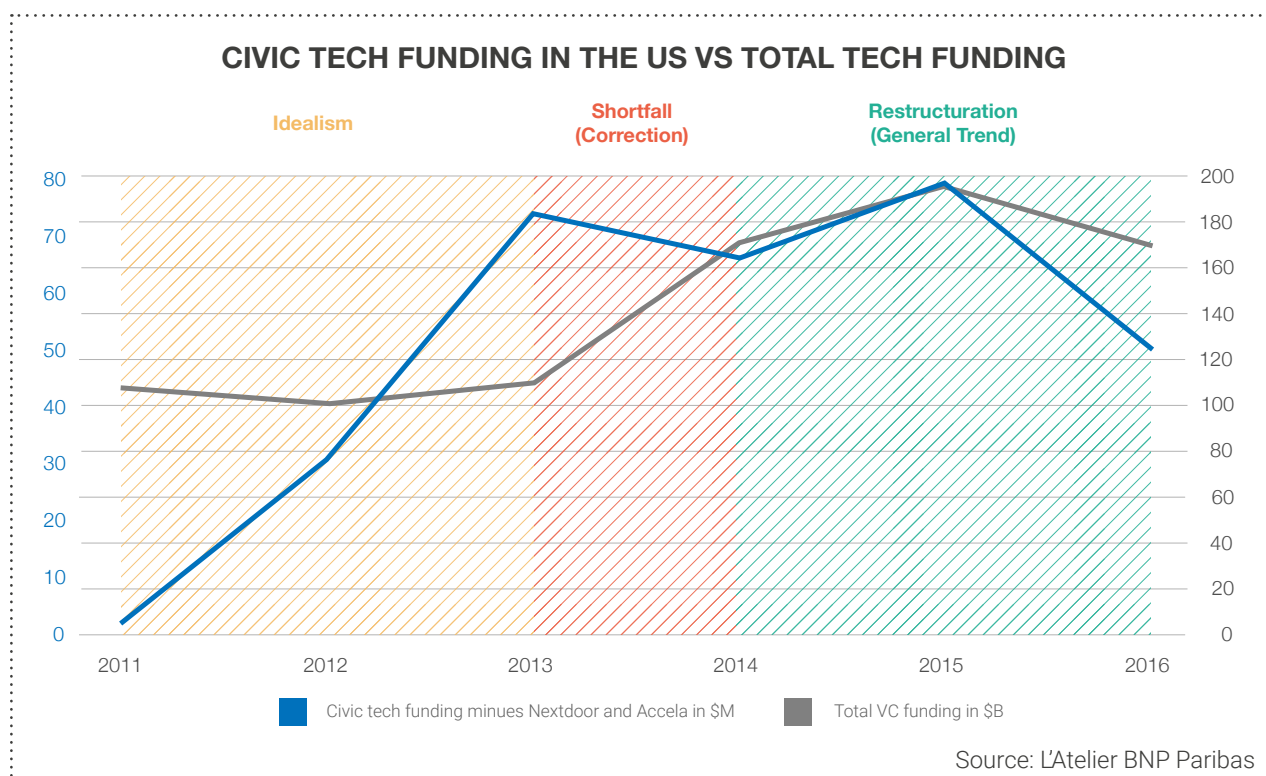
Accelerators

Due to the specificity of the field, specialized accelerators appeared to advise and guide startups. Code for America in particular has an essential role in the sector, as it is one of the main hubs where people succeed before being in charge of updating major public organizations from cities (Abhi Nemani, CDO of Los Angeles) to the U.S. Administration (Jennifer Pahlka, Deputy CTO of the White House from 2013 to 2014).

The city of Chicago launched its civic organization Smart Chicago Collaborative that focuses on the citizen experience and feedback to deliver better services.

An Ecosystem under restructuration

The Civic tech ecosystem has experienced a bubble of early overexcitement around 2013, that led to a refocus of the main investors and enablers on smaller portfolios with higher chances of success. Like other tech ecosystems before like blogs in 2006 or social networks in 2010, the ecosystem is following a cycle of idealism>shortfall>restructuration.



Besides the specific issues of civic businesses, investors are facing the classic challenges of backing a new trend. Many civic projects were lacking experience in both entrepreneurial and nonprofit field. Branding and promotion of these initiatives have often been a priority even for the funders, leaving impact metrics and analysis to a future day that is constantly delayed. The project flaws are often camouflaged from the start: many received a lot of attention at an early stage below the experimentation, without clear goals or oversight of their potential impact. Technology took up on Civic as entrepreneurs tend to reproduce technological success in other fields without necessarily researching on the opportunity or relevance of the technological aspect ("We want to be the Facebook of xxx").

The issue of this type of hybrid structure with both nonprofit and for-profit objectives finds a limit when it comes to aligning with investors. Sometimes, both founders and funders misestimate the real resources needed in terms of human/volunteers, cost and time and the difficulty to tie them together. Thus, many organizations are now able to raise small kickstarting amounts but taking that to the next step is like bringing it to a whole new level¹², endangering the entrepreneurs' chance to sustain their projects.

However, if the field created such passion, it is also because of very successful projects which inspired governments to run new initiatives¹³ in favor of transparency, participation and collaboration. The most famous being Change.org, a petition website with 185M active users where anybody can sign petitions. In 2012, five years after the launch of Change.org, the U.S. government released its official similar platform We The People, enabling a direct line between the administration and its citizens.

CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

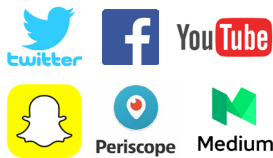
A CIVIC TECH MAPPING

BOTTOM - UP

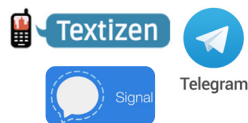
TOP - DOWN

CONNECT & INFORM

NEW MEDIAS



COMMUNICATION TOOLS



REACH THE CITIZEN



OPEN DATA ENABLERS



CONTRIBUTE & ACT

CROWD CAMPAIGN



CIVIC CROWDFUNDING



CROWDSOURCING



COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE



ORGANIZE & MANAGE

CAMPAIGN SAAS



LEGISLATION SAAS



POPULATION ANALYSIS



E-GOVERNANCE



COMMUNITY PLATFORM





HOW CITIES AND PUBLIC AGENCIES ARE ENGAGING CITIZEN IN BUILDING NEW SERVICES

As technology is more and more active in the private sector with a key war for talent in the Tech industry and beyond, the gap between public and private sectors is widening. Procurement process and time to execution are becoming a challenge and public career offers less attractiveness to this new population. In the meantime, because of this democratization of computer science, the number of citizens with technical knowledge willing to have impact is increasing significantly. Organizations have been able to leverage their staff and turn their developers, designers or entrepreneurs into engaged citizens, willing to become not only players but also agents of change,

Those tech citizens gather in “Civic Hack Nights” where everybody works and collaborates to improve their local to global community by building new public services which the whole population can benefit from, based on the open data publicly available and open source projects. Those hackathons initiated a clear majority of the civic tech projects and have been a key element in the popularization of civic tech, by bringing together the creative population and creating a context to work with.

Code for America, the most popular organizer, has shaped the movement with special programs to foster civic hacking, by creating local groups of volunteers organizing regular nights, providing seed funding, office space and mentorships for the advanced projects and connecting them with the right public institutions.

Their contribution consists of short and impactful actions to slowly update governments with a “bottom-up and outside in” approach: letting the citizen design external new services to get better outcomes for users and lower costs of administration in order to improve the way the programs are managed and operated. These new initiatives promote a new governance model in which citizens are in the center (citizen-centric).

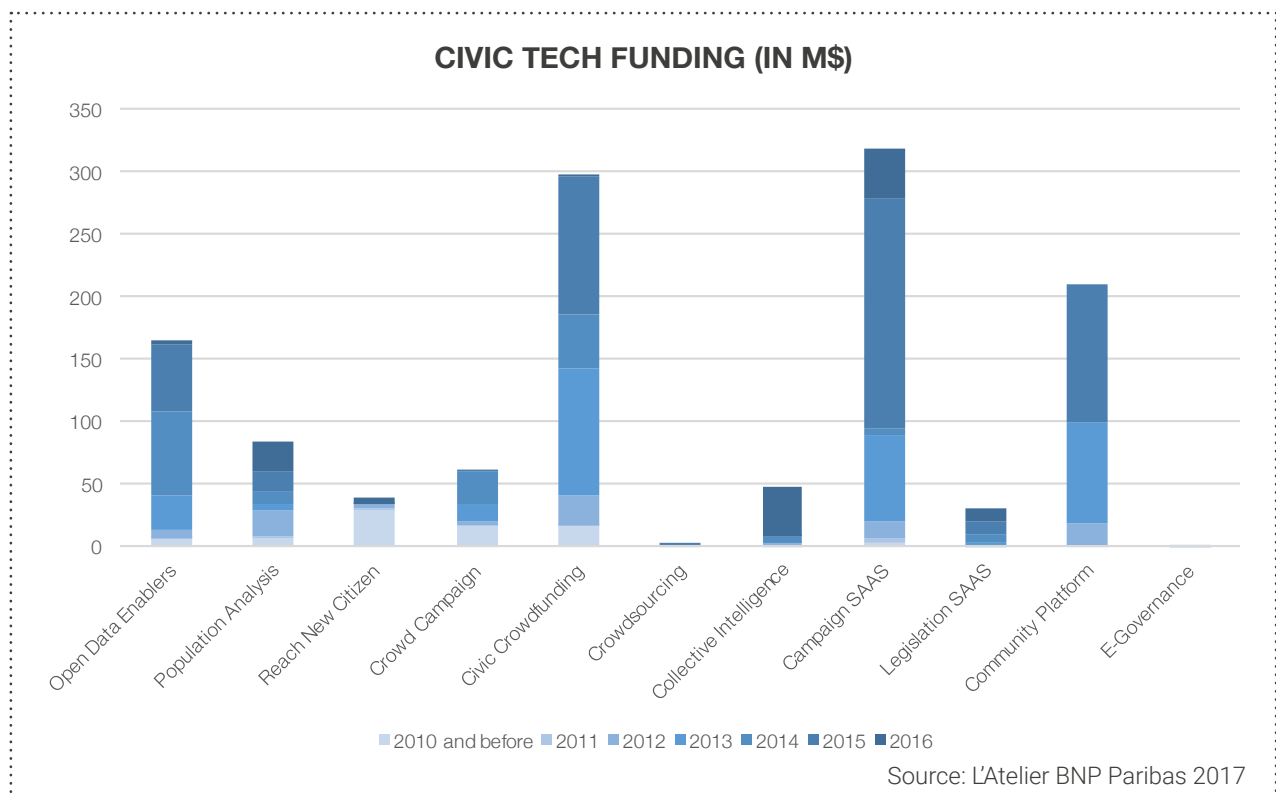
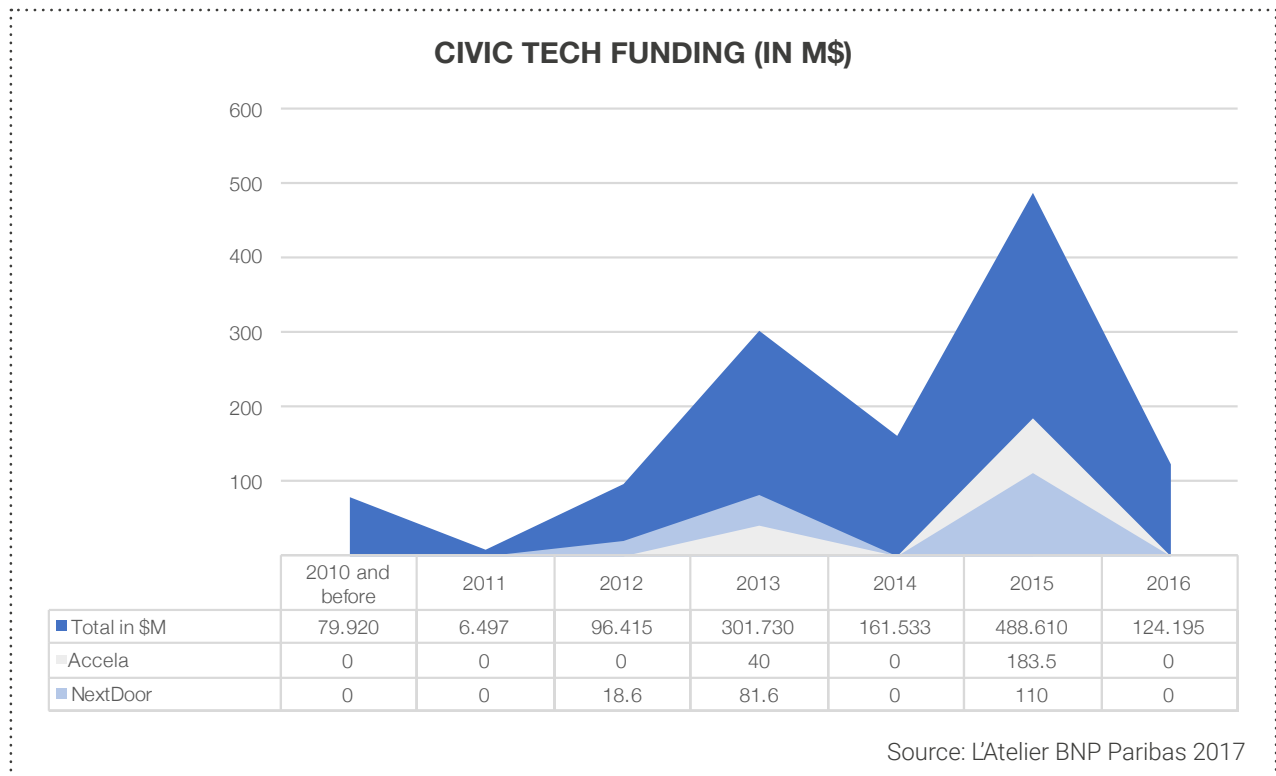
1.2 | Focus on civic engagement startups

Investment database

The database created in this study by l'Atelier BNP Paribas North America gathered funds of approximately 100 of the biggest startups in the civic engagement ecosystem.

- **Organizations:** Civic startups and private companies are included in the study as long as their value proposition can be considered as improving civic engagement. Pure govtech startups enhancing the information systems of public institutions are not taken into account. Startups with a total funding under \$500K are also not considered here.
- **Time frame:** Organizations who received funding from 2011 to 2016 are included. Organizations which received funding in 2010 and prior have been aggregated.
- **Investments:** Grants and investments made by foundations, corporations and private investors are included. Government and public funding are not considered.
- **Geography:** The research concentrates on North America investments only.

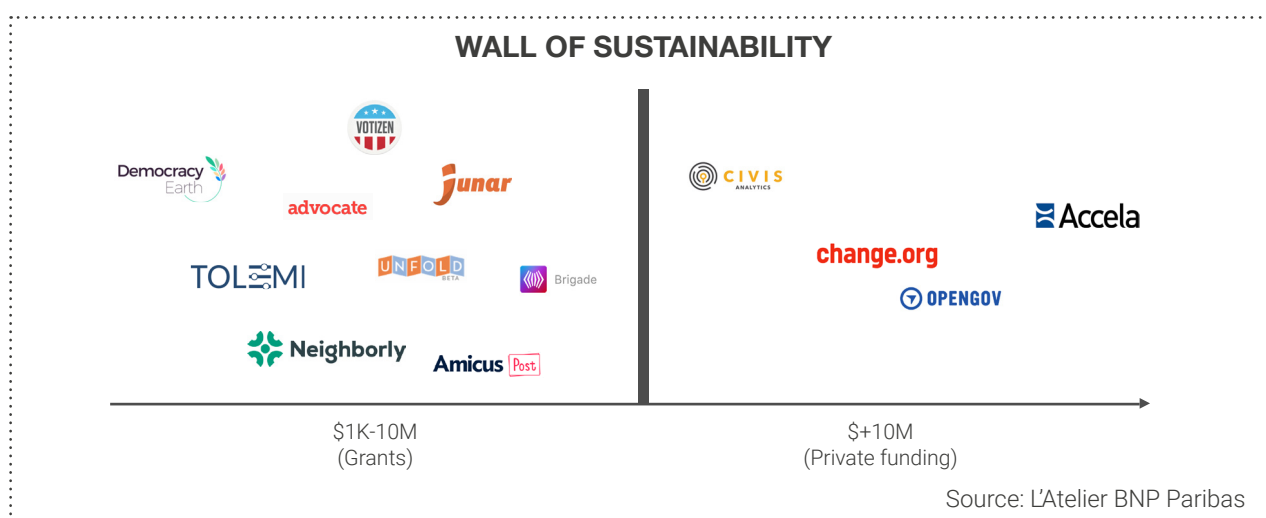
Key metrics and datapoints for US Civic Tech ecosystem



Investment analysis

As the civic tech sector is still in its infancy, very few companies emerged and managed to successfully grow over the years. The private funding market is dominated by a handful of companies which attract all the main investors and most of the capital, yet the amount collected is not significant compared to the total yearly impact investments. Inconsistency and peaks in the years are the results of very few startups raising exceptional amounts at the same time. By contrast, as many initiatives are emerging, the number of grants and public funding has exploded¹⁴, making the environment propitious for kickstarting and seed raising.

This is the civic tech paradox, i.e. an ease to launch initiatives but a strong difficulty to scale and take the projects to the next level in terms of ambition and business model sustainability. There is a general shortage of operating budget, making it difficult to maintain the best people devoted to the projects, even part-time as well as for volunteers..



The most popular services both in terms of number of projects and PR coverage revolve around crowdsourcing and its collective power. It involves the creation of a strong network which relies in general on a civic social platform. But the different paths startups took did not generate as much interest as expected from investors even during the 2014 peak. In the end, there is a clear difference between the services that were able to launch early on (such as open data enablers or civic crowdfunding like OpenGov or Neighborly) with a clear pricing/monetization and the others.

In fact, there is also an acculturation and maturity gap between entrepreneurs, no matter how well-intentioned their projects may be, and VCs who are struggling to find convincing teams to fit the vision and have to face the ecosystem's goldfish memory and the afterglow of popular long-term visions - yet not solving any short-term business issue.

An uncertain future support

As said previously, many enablers and accelerators of initiatives restrained their action lever for the best interest, due to the difficulty to build sustainable dynamics.¹⁵

Although the width of movement may reach a glass ceiling one day, the cultural and educational interest of the population is still growing well. Many micro-movements like Women in Civic Tech¹⁶ are attracting newcomers and the tech sphere is raising the attention on the use of this technology and their political responsibility since the elections in November 2016.¹⁷ The private sector and tech giants, in particular are pushing a lot to see this growing more and more.¹⁸

On the public administration side, the future support that the movement benefited from the Administration since the 2 Obama mandates remains uncertain. Many projects are already cut-off with little¹⁹ to no²⁰ reasons, and more may come.²¹ In return, this back-off created desire from local governments to move forward at their level and approach more companies to fill the White House void²², and it motivated the private sphere even more to help initiate new projects.

1.3 | What is next for the civic tech startup model?

The purpose of civic tech in the sector

Driven by social networks and the impact it had on citizens and communities in the digital era, public administrations at all level now understand better the importance of a digital transformation to enhance their processes. As said previously, many cities like Chicago with DoIT have launched their own innovation lab to rethink their work methods and services.

That new phenomenon matches the trend of digitization that is slowly reshaping all the industries in the world and is changing individual behavior and relationship thanks to technologies. It would undoubtedly have happened without the help of the civic tech ecosystem. However, what this movement made possible, even by solely putting a name on it, is the appearance of a legacy reshaping interactions with end users and service delivery. Entrepreneurs' involvement and the startup culture resulted in a faster time-to-market for services as well as a more experiment and diversity driven approach.

In order to increase their impact on public institutions and help them make the most of their innovations, the next challenge for startups is to scale up and for the ecosystem to unite and leverage its active community with a global perspective.

If many projects are created on a daily basis and experiment new ways of enhancing public engagement locally, very few of them are able to reproduce their success at a larger scale and create a connected network based on their product. Integrating a startup in a public institution remains extremely time-consuming and complicated because of the difference in local politics and population. Connecting all civic tech initiatives is an even harder and late challenge to tackle. The ecosystem would benefit from the movement being restructured, creating bridges, developing collaboration between the various players as well as uniting its voice.

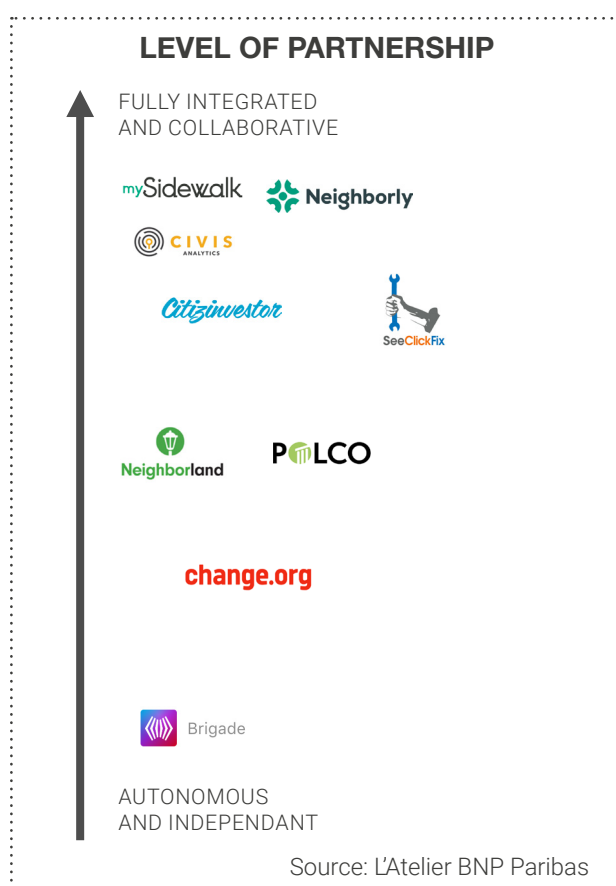
The relation between civic tech and public institutions

Even when a project is interesting and applicable, the trust of public institutions and autonomy for startups is inconsistent. By publishing or analyzing results from various data or opinions of the institutions and the public and as a new backed intermediary and neutral voice, civic tech services may end up by harming the partnered government. As OpenOakland founders explained from their experience with the city of Oakland²³, the interpretation and key takeaways of any project are carefully disclosed as they could threaten the communication objectives of the city. The unstable position of the organization that was neither in and out of the city administration and its blurry governance has lead to complicating the many processes in all projects.

“ If the organization didn’t have a relationship with the city to preserve, we [at OpenOakland] could make claims about what we believe and not take the city’s point of view at all and vice versa; if we were part of the city we would have to go through whatever communications department, whatever messaging they want to communicate. We were just in that middle zone. Where sometimes we broke with them and sometimes we worked with them.

Eddie Tejeda, Open Oakland, 2016

”



As of today, some popular civic projects with no competitive advantage are replicated by governments.²⁴ Their main struggle relates to onboarding the population, not so much their using digital tools to interact with administrations, but their lack of interest in the public matter. On the contrary, startups relying on high-level technologies are tending to keep their uniqueness and identity, until their key innovation is democratized and becomes a commodity. For most civic startups, if they don’t reach a critical size and leverage a multi-polar service, their future remains threatened.

This is why we are legitimate to question the level of integration of civic tech startups in governments, depending on the level of data extracted, public approval needed or external value they are able to bring. On the one hand, startups could develop deep synergies, being facilitators that could work closely with them on their civic goals, while securing a legitimate position by their side. On the other hand, they may also want to operate independently and as new players of the public landscape among governments, civic organizations or citizens

Operating startups vs civic tech startups

The specifics of players involved in a Civic tech project makes the blind replication of successful projects from the private sector counter-productive. The environment is systemically different because of its public aspect.

The common way of launching a business, especially a startup, is to target a specific need for a segment of the population and to circle around to gradually improve the service in terms of quality and quantity of people impacted. The deployment at a controlled small scale, among other execution mechanisms, enables a risk-taking approach where initiatives are ready and capable of handling failure.

This innovation method is not natural in governments' traditional work.

Public institutions cannot solely work by "niches" and consider the different communities as independent, working on each one separately, because they are actually held responsible collectively. Likewise, failing an initiative is extremely dangerous.

The consequences tend to multiply: any initiative must be measured, not only inside the targeted group but also in its relation and equality with other groups, in order to avoid social divide of the population. For instance, technology can slowly isolate the population that is not connected by giving a bigger and clearer voice to its users.

As a result, adaptating and deploying private methods and projects is extremely slow, as this requires thorough studies on impact and success applied to adoption, retention but also globalization.

As mentioned previously, raising funds is also different for startups working with private industries. When civic tech projects reach a certain size, public funds rarely manage to collect enough grants and entrepreneurs must find private funding, which is a real struggle.

Systemically, private funds have a lifetime of a dozen years and aim to get a return on investment within 3-5 years. With that type of timeframe, the funded companies tend to search for revenues and results as quickly as possible.

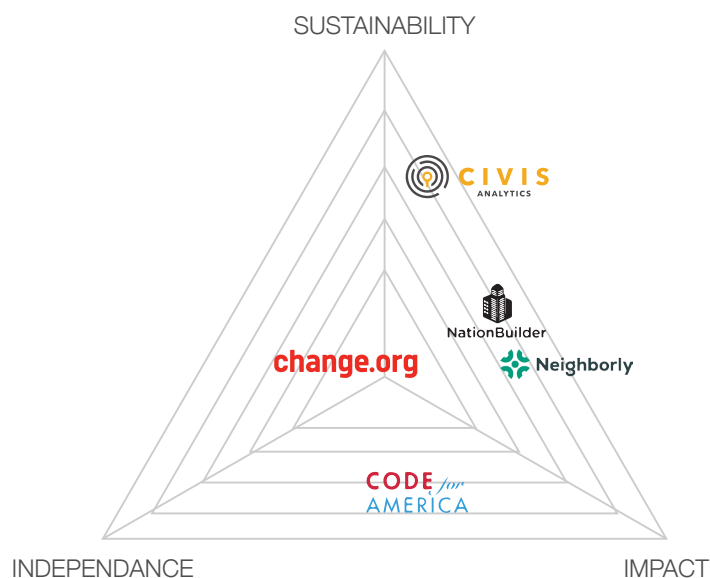
In addition, civic entrepreneurs focus mainly on making a social impact on the long-run (the impact of a civic union is usually measurable after 5-10 years). So even in the context of funds considering the social impact rather than revenues, finding a fitting compromise is difficult. The problem is not so much about finding important sums but rather finding what can be called "patient capital", that would not be looking for short-term return on investment.

change.org

Change.org is a certified B corporation and a for-profit business despite using the .org domain

In the end, choosing to operate civic tech initiatives with a business or nonprofit approach along with metrics is essential to remain focused, and the right model –if there is one– is yet to be found. Most of the time, the right positioning relies on the balance chosen between independence, sustainability and impact of the project

THE CIVIC TECH MODEL BALANCE



Source: L'Atelier BNP Paribas

2. How civic tech can better engage citizens

2.1 | Connect & Inform

Civic tech to communicate with the citizens

Reach more and better citizen/governments

Social media to both centralize the voices and decentralize the information

Social media, the symbol of our new digital era, is slowly becoming a major channel of public participation, and both governments/unions and citizens are using it to inform better and more broadly. Twitter has become by far the main source for real-time news on both top-down and bottom-up approach. It has 330 million active users sharing 500 million tweets per day, containing brief texts, pictures, and links.

For governments and civil unions, their reputation is directly related to the way media reports their actions. This dependency makes their supporters' engagement highly volatile. Social media enables a direct communication line with supporters to interact better, have full control over their content and share it with no cost on a massive scale. As an example, the Labour and the Conservatives have now more Twitter followers than party members.

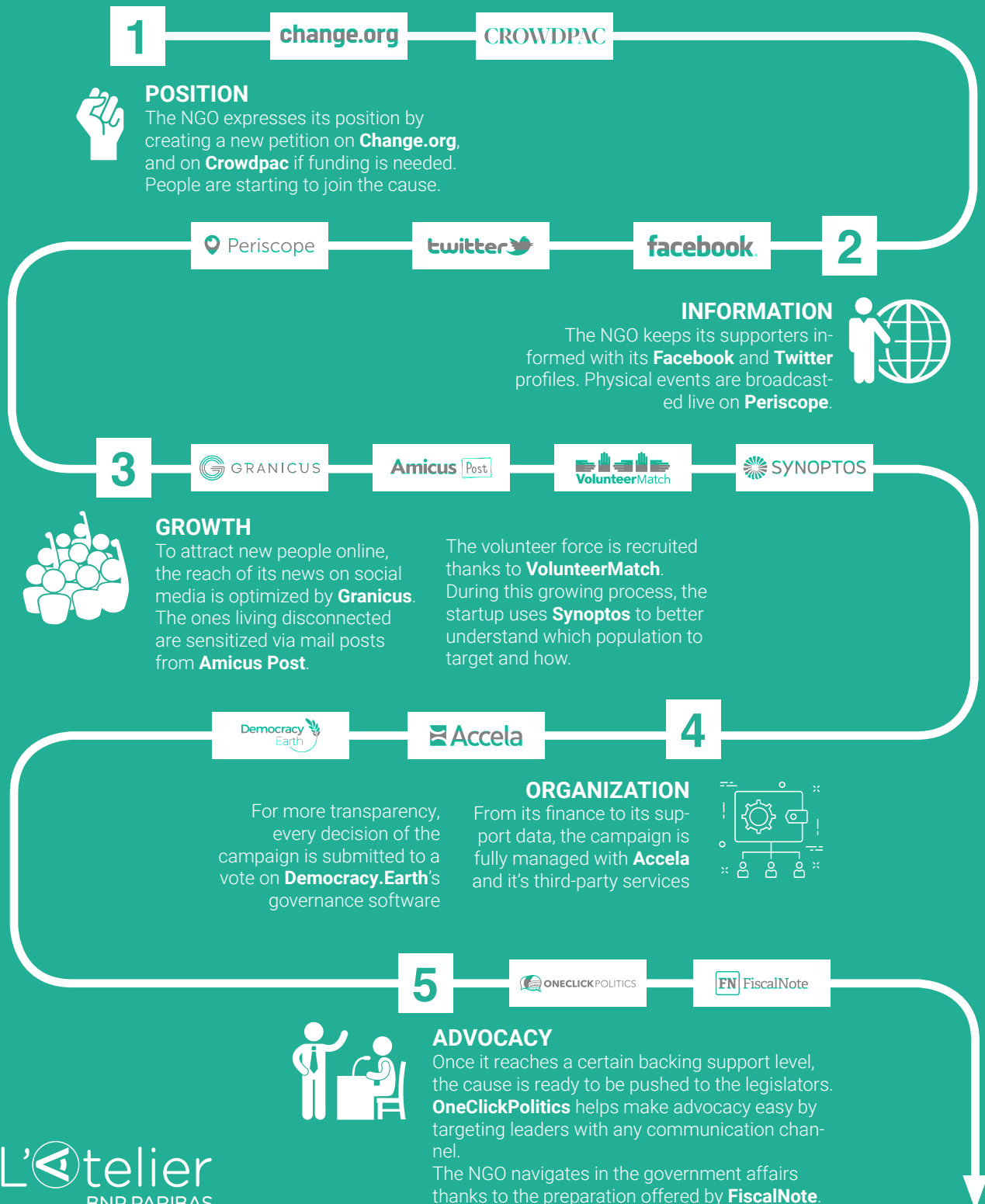
In particular, the use of these new social platforms has been critical during Obama's 2008 campaign. The team, for example, created video advertising messages on Youtube that have been watched 14.5 million hours, which would have cost \$47 million on broadcast TV.²⁵

If the acculturation impact on citizens is huge, it is important to note that the use of these platforms has never been a way of bringing people to the traditional engagement solutions such as public meetings. But they have played a major role in remodeling civic conversation.

Social media has offered citizens a new way of raising a collective voice outside of parties and unions. Twitter among other social media reconsidered the function of journalists and disintermediated the status of the press. Today, with the publication of tweets in real time, any citizen can contribute to informing its pairs, express opinions and join movements. The movement of Black Lives Matters heavily relied on the network effect of these platforms and how easy it was for users to spread the word and gain attention for example. Civil right activists now have a variety of digital tools to release news whether you want to share it with a small group of activists and coordinate (WhatsApp, Signal), or to mobilize as many strangers as you can (Twitter, Periscope).

HOW A DIGITAL NGO USES CIVIC TECH IN ITS WORK

After discovering a shocking problem, an NGO wants to tackle the issue and push a new federal law



In the end, Twitter creates an organic environment of ephemeral fragmented updates forming together an awareness system. It has been characterized by specialists like Alfred Hermida as “ambient journalism” providing a mix of news, information and comments, usually connected to current reality, but without accuracy or an established order.

TWITTER



Descr: Social network
Funded: 2006
HQ: San Francisco, CA
Funding: IPO in 2013
Milestone: +330M active monthly users

FACEBOOK



Descr: Social network
Funded: 2004
HQ: Menlo Park, CA
Funding: IPO in 2012
Milestone: +2B active monthly users

Open data to improve trust and transparency

Digital enables governments to centralize their data that used to be physically stored. They now have access to a massive volume of information regarding population statistics to finance at any geographic level. But that data used to be complex and non-standardized which was making it unusable for any other purpose than just fact-checking.

The Open Data movement has been created first in order to maximize the value of governments' data by making it readable and intelligible. It is based on two principles: standardizing data as much as possible and publishing it without any restrictions. Citizens can find any information they are looking for on a website listing all the data the government chooses to make public.

This openness has been improving trust in governments by creating more transparency. Citizens are able to understand how their elected representatives are spending their tax dollars, passing laws, prioritizing actions, and more generally how they are serving their people, which makes them more willing to engage in the policy's success.

One of the main companies enabling open data in public institutions is OpenGov, which seeks to optimize the management of financial data. Governments can use it to enhance their communication with citizens and tell a clearer story to engage discussions with the use of visualization tools, as well as improve their internal intelligence and efficiency. If the value for an internal purpose has made even the smallest institutions sign up, it is mostly big governments that are leveraging their open data product.

OPENGOV



Descr: Government performance management software
Funded: 2012
HQ: Redwood City, CA
Funding: \$77M
Milestone: +1,500 client governments

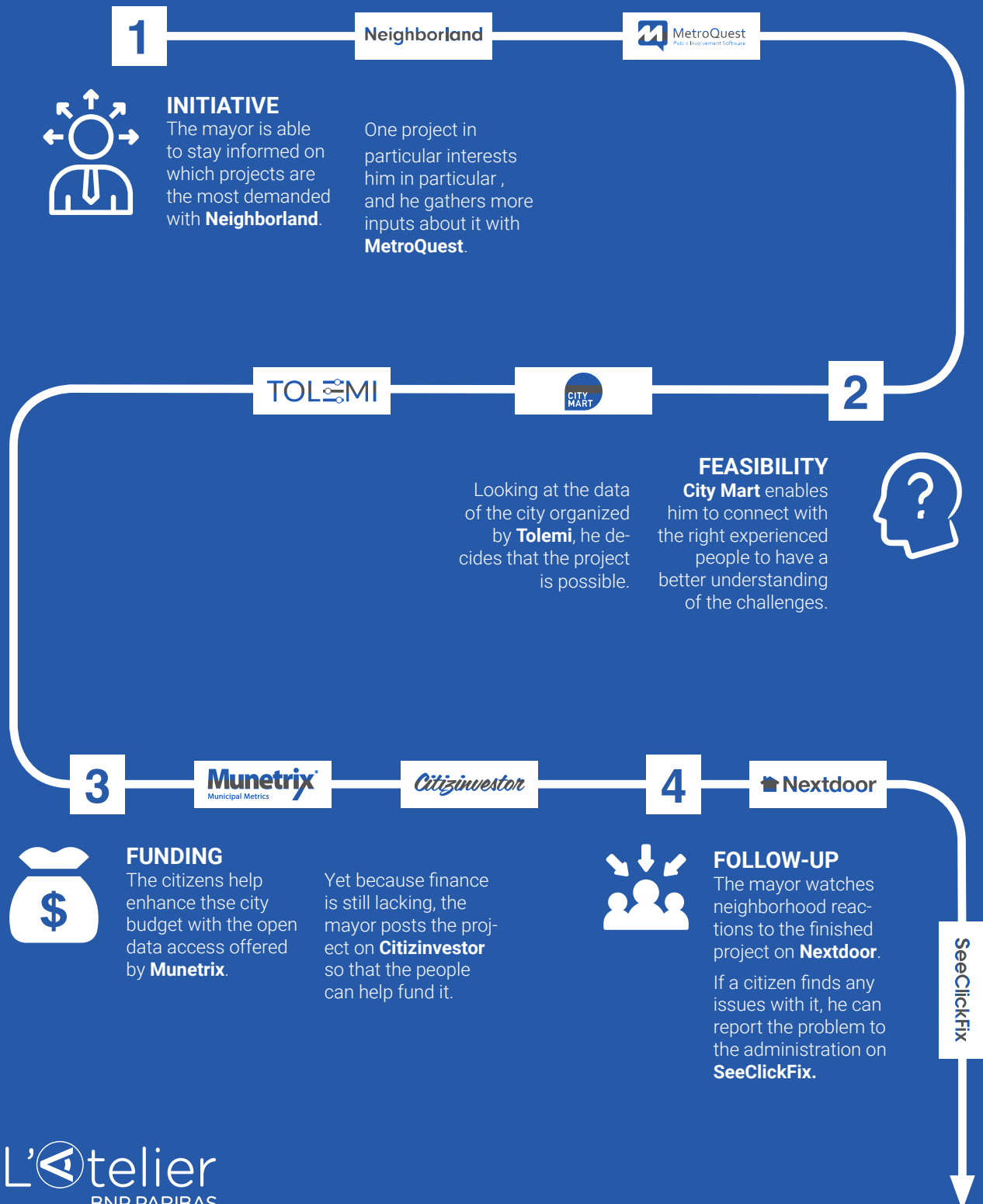
SOCRATA



Descr: Making existing government data discoverable, usable and actionable
Funded: 2007
HQ: Seattle, WA
Funding: \$54.5M
Milestone: Large cities (Los Angeles) and states (Massachusetts) as clients

HOW A DIGITAL CITY MAYOR USES CIVIC TECH IN ITS WORK

Administrating a large city, the mayor is having difficulties understanding and reacting to the issues of his people



2.2 | **Contribute & Act**

Civic tech to empower individuals and crowds

Revive the culture of contribution

Foster opinions with collective intelligence

Civic tech has been helpful in very early engagements like debating ideas and fostering opinions, as it can give citizens the tools to contribute to discussions at much more important scale while keeping it clear and efficient.

If people have political opinions, most of them try to remain silent and avoid debating, especially on social media which is supposed to be their personal platform for discussion. Brigade, for example, has been trying to tackle the problem of expression by creating a platform with an approachable and enjoyable experience where anybody could raise a question or a concern and exchange to participate and grow their maturity on the subject. Its core product is a stack of cards with opinions to agree or disagree with, a dynamic tree of the different reasons behind both statements and visualization tools of the global opinion.

By pushing collaboration in the indexation of the opinions, the idea is to create a collective intelligence under the form of a political dynamic Wikipedia that could be able to generate new ideas and solutions to problems that no one could have done alone. Being able to express his voice more simply and for a much larger audience of other engaged citizens encourages users' political awareness and incites to do more.

BRIGADE



BRIGADE

Descr: Voter social network
Funded: 2014
HQ: San Francisco, CA
Funding: \$9.5M
Milestone: +13K users, +1.1M positions in 2015

MINDMIXER



MindMixer

Descr: Online conversation platform
Funded: 2010
HQ: Kansas City, MO
Funding: \$23.2M
Milestone: 1.6M participants in 1.2K communities

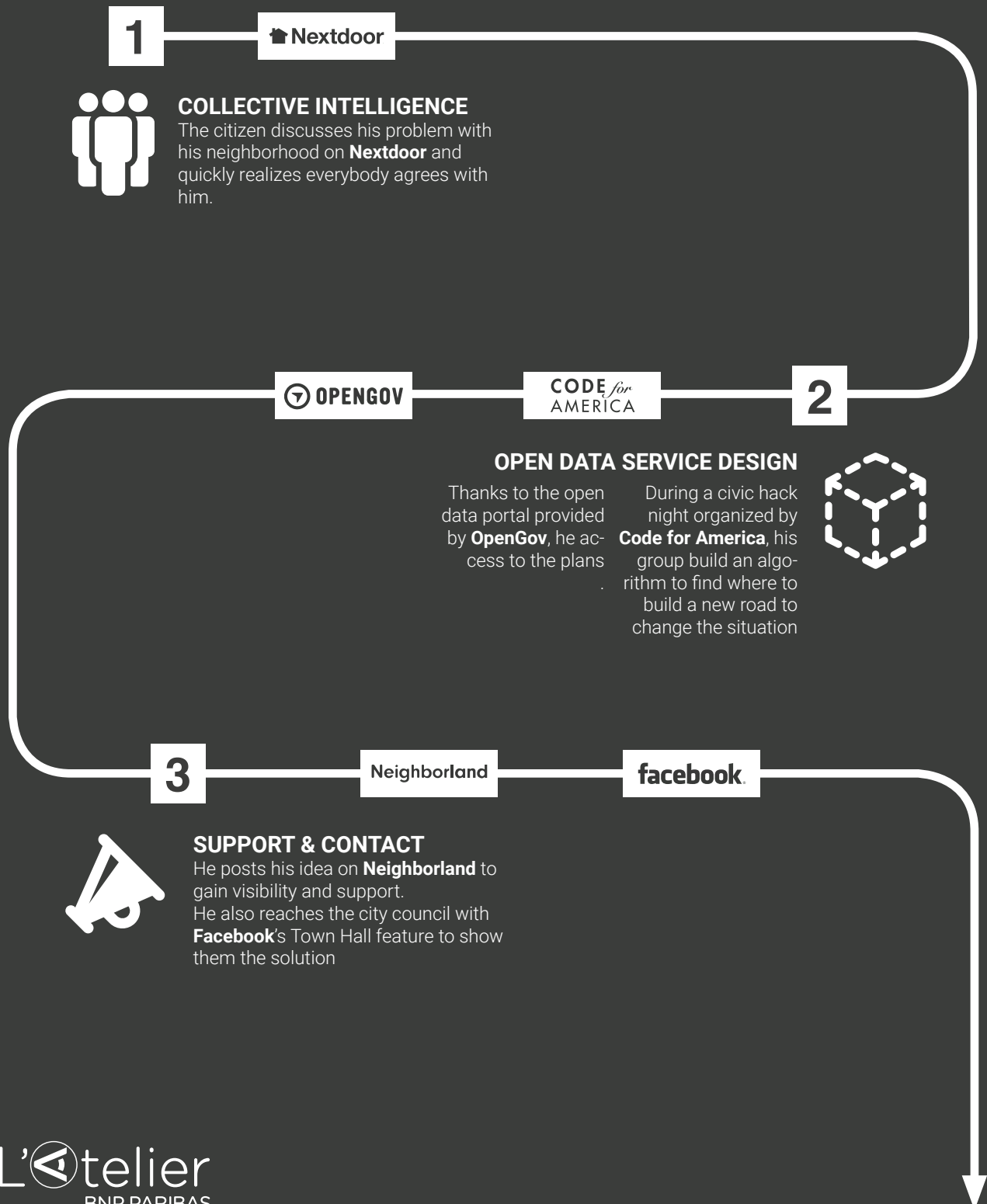
Crowdsourcing to contribute to public services

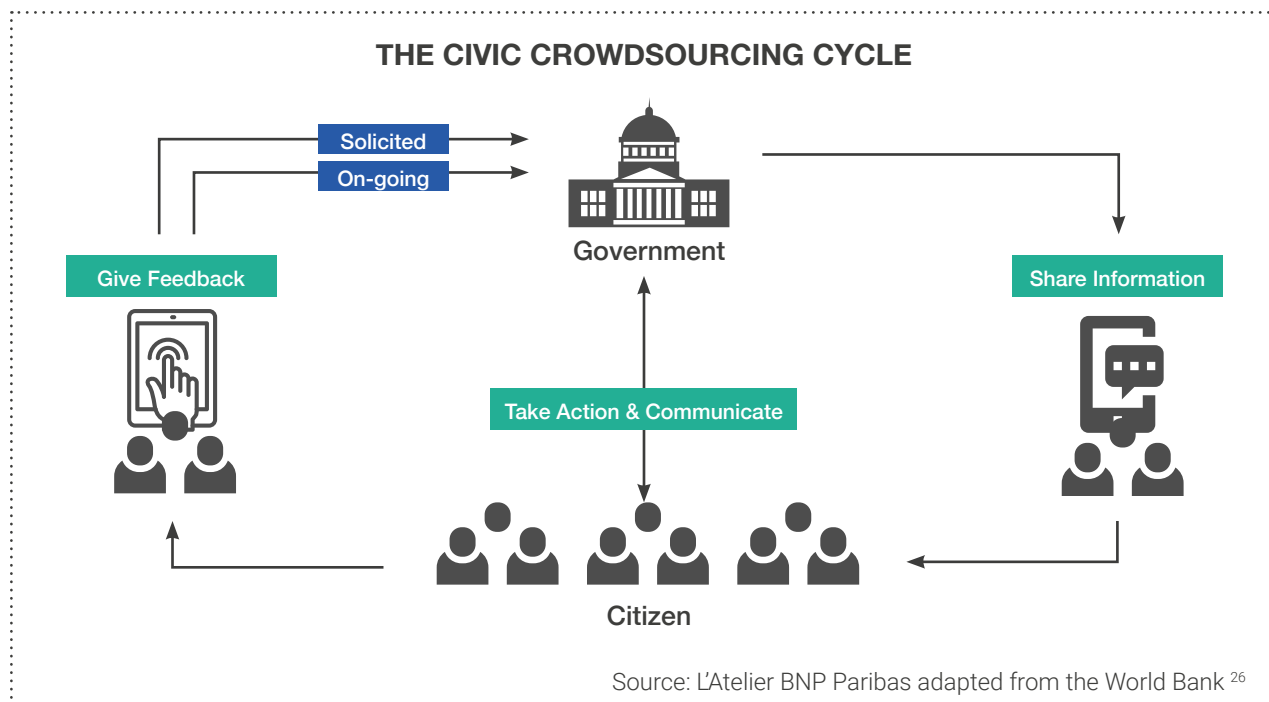
The idea of crowdsourcing is to let citizens actively produce and submit data that will complete the content of public institutions, creating a network of active mobilized contributors, directly participating in the enhancement of public services and increasing the communication between the residents and the public administration.

The open data movement, requiring a huge amount of real-time data, has been naturally fostering a strong citizen contribution culture from the beginning. It has mostly focused on tactical mapping and reporting in emergencies, market information sharing, or community planning.

HOW A DIGITAL ACTIVIST USES CIVIC TECH IN HIS WORK

A citizen notices that his city has a traffic problem and wants to help solve it.





SeeClickFix is an advocacy service which focuses on local governments that have been pushing crowd-sourcing since its creation. Users can help the appropriate government agencies spot out problems in their territory- such as malfunctioning floor lamp or graffiti at a bus stop-by signaling it and marking the problem on a map. Government agencies and journalists are involved in the feedback process for better prioritization of the issues. With its popularization in local areas, it is possible for residents in the same neighborhood to be connected together and responsible for their area, becoming naturally accountable for their civic duty.

These services are envisioning citizen engagement like a dynamic and collaborative partnership between governments and citizens where information and action circulate.

SEECCLICKFIX

SeeClickFix

Descr: Communication tools for residents and governments
Funded: 2008
HQ: New Haven, CT
Funding: \$3.1M
Milestone: +3 issues fixed

METROQUEST

MetroQuest
 Public Involvement Software

Descr: Collect input on key infrastructure projects
Funded: 1997
HQ: Vancouver, Canada
Funding: Undisclosed
Milestone: Hundreds of public agencies as clients (North Carolina, Portland)

Enable the people to act collectively

Crowd campaign to defend a cause

New digital services are now a crucial democratizing force to defend a cause and impact on the discussions.

Citizen and civil unions that would like to take engagement to the next level and address the administrations / governments often struggle with the various possible ways to do so. Public marches have the disadvantage of fragmenting the address and town hall meetings are efficient only locally. Making a real impact often comes down to hiring a renowned lobbyist.

The petition website Change.org, probably the most famous civic tech service in the world, succeeded in becoming a real marketplace of civic engagement. Visitors can visit the website to find petitions created by users that facilitate information on the issues from a local to global level and raise a collective voice for marginalized and uncoordinated communities. Anyone can find and join the campaigns that matter most to them. As signature holders can also be petition creators with no restriction, it enables a decentralized collective action that empowers citizens to pursue social changes. A recent evolution, the petition service has leveraged to become a policy-making platform. Elected officials and companies now have a special page on the website where anybody can push ideas to craft solutions together.

CHANGE.ORG

change.org

Descr: Online petition platform
Funded: 2007
HQ: San Francisco, CA
Funding: \$72M
Milestone: +185M users,
 22K successful impacting petitions

CAUSES

 **causes**

Descr: Online campaigning platform
Funded: 2007
HQ: San Francisco, CA
Funding: \$16M, Acquired by Brigade in 2014
Milestone: \$48M and 34M signatures collected, 40M users at its peak

Crowdfunding to power campaigns

As campaigning with only human resources is hard, new startups are also facilitating the financing of causes to erase as many barriers to action as possible. Models of peer-to-peer funding services (crowdfunding) are for example focusing exclusively on public projects and campaigns. The idea behind is to be able to democratize philanthropism for any size of wallet and give any citizen the possibility to help.

Citizeninvestor, in particular, is trying to implicate the citizen in the civic projects (mostly infrastructure) of local governments that cannot be initiated solely with the public budget. Once a project is posted on the website, citizens can make tax-deductible donations to fund them. The service differentiates with classic civic crowdfunding services in that it aggregates projects transmitted by local governments only, and caters specifically to citizen and not professional investors, so that the goal is not to create a competitor to the public administration in the launching of public projects but rather enhance the collaboration between them and their population.

CITIZINVESTOR



Descr: Civic crowdfunding platform
Funded: 2012
HQ: Tampa, Florida
Funding: \$150K
Milestone: +25 successfully funded projects for a total of \$270K invested

NEIGHBORLY



Descr: Municipal bonds crowdfunding platform
Funded: 2012
HQ: San Francisco, CA
Funding: \$30.5M
Milestone: +11K investors and +50K issuers

2.3 | Organize & Manage

Civic tech to reconsider our institutions

Disrupt the work of our institutions

Software to democratize the operational work of unions

A new generation of Software-as-a-Service civic tech startups have appeared to merge all the tasks and services a campaign would need to operate and make its management accessible by anybody without any experience whatsoever.

When it comes to organizing a cause, a campaign or an organization, the digital strategy used to be the combination of multiple channels and providers of services from managing volunteers to evaluating the finance and fundraisings. It was difficult for organizations to focus on the people and the individuals rather than on digital service management.

NationBuilder has managed to simplify and synthesize those tasks for a cause of any size whether it is a funding campaign for an ill individual to the running of a presidential campaign. The company sells a one-stop shop equipment campaigns, nonprofits, government agencies but also businesses with all the tools they need to track, analyze and engage with their supporters. As Jim Gillian, the founder and CEO said, "The purpose of NationBuilder is to bring that kind of power where everyone can connect with people who can help them accomplish great things".

Companies have also developed new services to facilitate the work of elected representatives. FiscalNote has built a platform to help organizations succeed in public affairs and manage government relations. They provide state and federal bill tracking and analysis, Access detailed, up-to-date records and analytics on every legislator and even Forecast responses with likely outcomes for every bill, and even individual vote breakdowns. By acting on the work of both supporters and public institutions, these new tools can help citizens organize and reduce their dependency on human resources in order to become sustainable players in the public landscape.

NATIONBUILDER



NationBuilder

Descr: Community organizing software
Funded: 2009
HQ: Los Angeles, CA
Funding: \$14.75M
Milestone: +9K clients in 112 countries (United Nations, Amnesty International)

FISCALNOTE



FiscalNote

Descr: Legislative predictive software
Funded: 2009
HQ: Washington, DC
Funding: \$28.23M
Milestone: Large organizations as clients (National Education Association, Accenture, Salesforce)

Strategy-driven Software to causes and public decisions

The ways civic organizations gain new supporters and win votes are expanding and leveraging the intelligence deriving from advanced algorithms, using social network data.

As traditional marketing is not dynamically personalized for each individual, it is impossible to appeal to the full range of the population during a campaign. But with Big Data and Artificial Intelligence technologies, computers are now able to forecast and simulate social scenarios precisely enough. Companies are now using a scientific approach to predict how people will react when confronted with a question.

Civis Analytics partnered with Obama's 2008 campaign team to help him win the elections. With a national database of 220 million Americans, they help nonprofits and companies understand better their supporters and create better marketing strategies often called "microtargeting", by customizing the interaction with each individual via Facebook, e-mail or a visit in person.

CIVIS ANALYTICS



Descr: Public predictive analytics
Funded: 2013
HQ: Chicago, IL
Funding: \$22M
Milestone: Large organizations as clients (Obama 2012, Boeing, Verizon)

SYNOPTOS



SYNOPTOS

Descr: Old/new medias predictive analytics
Funded: 2009
HQ: Washington, DC
Funding: \$825K
Milestone: Large organizations as clients (the White House, Microsoft)

Rethink the model of our democracy

Technologies are enabling new political systems

The Internet is the first communication innovation which enables transmission and reception at the same cost and speed. As our institutions are based on political systems relying on older technologies, there is an opportunity to bring democracy to a much more decentralized organization, where citizens can reduce their dependency on elected representatives and engage with many more subjects, limiting the constraints of scale typical of any direct democracy.

Democracy.Earth, founded by former members of the Argentinian political party “El Partido de la Red”, has been leveraging Blockchain technology to build a new voting platform based on liquid democracy, a referendum-based system that has been experimented by many technology-driven parties in Europe, in which anyone can vote directly on issues or delegate his voting power to someone he/she trusts, who can also do the same. This system could also structure more than the legislative branch and disrupt the whole political decision process, as people could for instance allocate the budget for each department of their local to national governmental administration unit.

Many issues still exist beyond technical implementation and feasibility of adopting such a model to adapt the actual way representative democracies operate. More than improving cooperation and engagement, these new decision-making systems offer a vision of how civic tech can entirely reshape our democracy. Here, technologies themselves are not just enhancing and upgrading existing structures but creating a new path for citizens to get organized and act democratically.

DEMOCRACY.EARTH



Descr: Blockchain governance platform
Funded: 2012
HQ: Palo Alto, CA
Funding: \$220K
Milestone: First public demo to be released this year, already tested by Colombia

Reconsider the concept of citizenship

Some civic entrepreneurs are slowly introducing a global vision, powered by world citizen with a collective responsibility and engagement. Through the Internet, people are interacting in an interdependent space where they share the same language, culture, and cognitive biases while preserving local singularities and specificities. They can participate and engage in causes they wouldn't have access to in the physical world, in a global movement of solidarity.

Projects like Bitnation- an operational decentralized borderless voluntary nation (Blockchain powered Jurisdiction)- are trying to provide the same service as traditional governments (ID, reputation, security) through virtual countries and physical embassies, with no borders or geographic restrictions. Within 3 years, it has been able to offer identity program and emergency services for refugees, and even e-residency contracts for Estonian foreigners to allow them to do business contracts or notarize their marriages. Obviously, this model has not obtained full recognition from legal jurisdictions yet but shows the dream of what a global and decentralized system could look like in an ideal world.

BITNATION

 **BITNATION**

Descr: Digital Government Service

Funded: 2014

HQ: NA

Funding: Undisclosed

Milestone: 20K applyers for e-residency program with Estonia from 138 countries

Conclusion

Toward a Third Wave of Civic Tech

We are currently envisioning a shift from a traditional world, centered around institutions, to a new citizen-centric model of society. Citizen engagement can be improved in many ways and civic tech startups are showing how democracy in the Internet era could look like.

After a first wave of enthusiasm and overexcitement for the civic tech ecosystem followed by a second one, much more modest, both entrepreneurs and enablers are currently developing more sustainable civic tech initiatives while the ecosystem is restructuring and stabilizing. The various possible models are starting to standardize to create the right path for sustainable organizations.

We are at the edge of the Third Wave of Civic Tech. The main inhibition factors are linked to scalability/replicability of models, as well as a fragmented ecosystem. Most of those startups are dependent on a strong relationship with governments, undermining their risk-taking capabilities. In the end, building a civic business is systemically different in terms of go-to-market strategy, speed of operation, fundraising and partners to interact with. The model is about finding the balance between integrity, impact, and sustainability.

The question of “efficient” citizen engagement can be raised, as the initiatives are helping citizens to be active digitally in their community, but not always beyond their screen. If one can be doubtful about the actual conversion rate of digital services, the success in terms of awareness raised is no longer to be proven.

The ecosystem is supported by dynamic civic events where everyone gathers to help develop the interaction between citizens and their elected governments, reshape public services and challenge traditional institutions. It has a unique ability to take coders, designers, entrepreneurs or anyone interested in the topic, doubtful of the democratic system and its future, and turn them into change-makers and activists, believing in a better future which they can contribute to. These civic tech players from the crowd are showing the path for a new form of public participation and a truly new generation of smart citizens.

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