Is e-governance a women's issue?

Introduction
One of us works for a women's organisation called Women's Net, and she is considering to organise a workshop on women and e-government. As we are not very familiar with this issue-space, and also, as we wonder whether the learning up of women and governance is really helpful in the light of the objectives of women's organisations, we ask: is e-governance a women's issue, and should it be so?

Actor-Issue Map: governance is not a women's issue

Querying Google for the terms woman, ICT and governance, our suspicions are confirmed: governance only appears on the sites of international governing bodies. The term seems to have little to no life beyond the confines of these upper echelones. Virtually no women's organisations are attached to this term. Copying the query terms women AND ICT with democracy AND empowerment, on the other hand, women's organisations do show up on our maps.

Issue Map: Governance is not a women's issue, but perhaps democracy is?

If women's organisations are to become active in this issue area, it seems more appropriate to take up (one of) the other two terms, democracy and empowerment, and attempt to pull the issue-network towards them. But which of these two terms is in this respect more appropriate? One thing to notice is that the term democracy brings along a particularly rich vocabulary, one that is both critical and constructive. (Attached to democracy, we find institutionalisation and male-bias, but also women in politics and accountability.) The term democracy seems to take into account both the frustrations of women, as well as their aspirations. The term empowerment, on the other hand, emerges here as a relatively poor term – likewise governance, incidentally, which brings along an exclusively positive vocabulary, a feel good motto of “making things better.”

Conclusion
There is at least one catch, as the terms that come with democracy are rather theoretical: There is talk of participation here... In this respect, a crucial question is, how can the notion of democracy also begin to cover a feminist practice? One answer is to drop the term advocacy (which is currently linked to empowerment) into the democratic space. Women's Net, which is now attached to empowerment, should not move into the governance issue space. Governance is not a women's issue. But if Women's Net would decide to move into the world of democracy instead, it would do well to bring along one of its key issues, advocacy.