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Genres and Models of E-Democracy

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Designing the E-democracy Forum: Genres and Models of E-democracy

PhD Thesis

Faculty of Engineering and Science
Aalborg University, Denmark

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Ph.D. degree in Computer Science

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Abstract

This thesis explores the initiation of discussion forums for the purpose of E-democracy. The points of departure are two problems identified from a longitudinal case study and the E-democracy literature:

1. How can major objectives in E-democracy initiatives be identified?
2. How can the identified objectives be linked to information technology?

A longitudinal case study forms the empirical part of this thesis. Data collection was carried out for 28 months and focused on two rounds of development in an E-democracy project. The first part focused on the development and use of a discussion forum in a project named Democracy Square, initiated by two regional and one local municipality in southern Norway. The second part focused on the initiation of a second E-democracy project in one of the municipalities involved in the Democracy Square project. The analyses were based on content analysis of online postings and dialogues with major stakeholders in the projects. The theoretical development in this thesis is based on literature on democracy models, communication genres and IT artefacts. Results from the work are presented in six papers. The papers are published or accepted for publication in international journals or conferences with peer review processes.

In the first part of the longitudinal case study (the Democracy Square project) differences between politicians and citizens were identified. Postings added in the discussion forum showed that politicians wanted simply to disseminate information. This was in contrast to citizens' requests for real participation in the decision-making process. Major objectives were not shared between the major stakeholder groups. This contrast formed the basis for formulating the first problem presented above. Five communication patterns were identified, illustrating how only some of the postings seemed to serve both politicians' and citizens' interests. The postings do not appear to correspond to the initial ideas underlying the project. Based on this, I questioned to what extent the technological form was designed to support the requests from different stakeholders. This led me to formulate the second problem.

To address the first problem, I develop four models of E-democracy. Comprising stereotypical forms of democracy, the models form a theoretical basis to investigate and compare overall objectives for E-democracy projects. Categorized on the basis of inclusion in the decision-making process and control of the agenda, I present the models of Partisan, Liberal, Deliberative and Direct E-democracy.

The second problem is addressed by bridging knowledge of IT artefacts, genres of communication and E-democracy models. IT artefacts are conceptualised by the technology itself, as well as the tasks, structures and contexts in which the technology is embedded. Genres are characterised by common substances (social motives) and form (physical and linguistic features). I argue that the genre perspective can address IT artefacts' characteristics on technology (form), tasks and structures (substance), and that the E-democracy models address the context in which the technology is embedded. Based on literature reviews, genres for the E-democracy models are identified.

Finally, I introduce a process for identifying objectives and genres in E-democracy projects. The process consists of two phases - addressing main objectives of the E-democracy models and identifying E-democracy genres to support these models. Based on an action case approach, the suggested process is explored in the latter part of the longitudinal case study, in

the initiation of a new E-democracy project. The action case study illustrates the potential of the process to guide practice in the early initiation stages of E-democracy projects.

Contributions are made in three different areas. First, increased understanding of major challenges in E-democracy initiatives is made from the Democracy Square project. Secondly, theoretical contributions are made. The proposed E-democracy models allow identification and comparison of different potential objectives in E-democracy initiatives. By bridging theories on IT artefacts, genres of communication and E-democracy models, knowledge is added on how to connect technology to objectives. Thirdly, the suggested process provides guidance in practice by identifying potential objectives and genres to be implemented in the initiated E-democracy project.

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Table of Contents

Figures

Tables

Appendices

1 Introduction

The idea of democracy is fundamentally dependent on effective communication and informed decision-making about public issues among citizens, politicians, officers and other stakeholders who may be impacted by the decisions (Habermas, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000). The term E-democracy is explained in several ways. Anttiroiko (2003, p. 127) states that "E-Democracy must be tailored to really give people tools to achieve government". Grönlund (2003) discusses information technology (IT) usage in democratic processes. Commonly characterised by utilising information and communications technology (ICT), various other characteristics of E-democracy are also described. E-democracy can enhance democracy (Aidemark, 2003; Chadwick & May, 2003; Grönlund, 2003; Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003; Kampen & Snijkers, 2003; Macintosh, McKay-Hubbard, & Shell, 2005). E-democracy is designed to enhance, not supplant the traditional representative institutions (Chadwick & May, 2003). Different roles are described by focusing on the connection between citizens and government (Grönlund, 2001; Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003), and on politicians specifically (Chadwick & May, 2003). Potential benefits are highlighted, including improved interaction between citizens and the government (Jensen, 2003), broadened political participation (Chadwick & May, 2003; Grönlund, 2003; Kampen & Snijkers, 2003; Tsagarousianou, Tambini, & Bryan, 1998) and equal access to information for all parties concerned (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003; Tsagarousianou, Tambini, & Bryan, 1998).

Based on these characteristics, my definition of E-democracy in this thesis refers to the use of IT in political debates and decision-making processes, complementing or contrasting traditional means of communication. E-democracy is thus seen not as a tool in itself directing democracy in a specific direction (Grönlund, 2001) but rather as an opportunity to support development in various directions (Gustafsson, 2002), such as strengthening the influence of administration or political elites, or strengthening the influence of all citizens.

While there is a reasonably extensive theoretical discussion on E-democracy (e.g., (Bellamy, 2000; Gimmler, 2001; Van Dijk, 2000), the need for empirical studies and subsequent theory-building in the field has been raised (Andersen & Henriksen, 2005; Grönlund, 2004). There is a need to build theoretical and empirical bases to better understand the link between technology and politics (Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002) since the connection is poorly understood (Moon & Yang, 2003). In particular, the connection between IT and new media in E-democracy projects must be addressed in more detail (Smith, 2000; Steyaert, 2000).

Reported E-democracy initiatives have, in a majority of cases, only had a rather modest impact on public participation (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003). One explanation is the absence of knowledge about the connection between technology and democracy. Technology is often simplistically coupled to direct democracy, ignoring the need to understand how IT actually does influence democracy (Bellamy & Taylor, 1998; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000). The lack of discussion on the potential impact of IT on processes of democratic decision-making is found to be a major reason for restricted success in E-democracy projects (Schmidtke, 1998). "The added value of technology will ultimately be proven through democratic objectives and gains" (Anttiroiko, 2003, p. 125). Aidemark (2003, p. 323) found that: "the important lesson is that there is no simple connection between the problems of democracy and the IT-based systems that are supposed to be supportive. It is the intentions and strategies behind the democratic processes that are important". Objectives, strategies and processes of democracy must be addressed as well as a focus on technological concerns

(Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Grönlund, 2003; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000; Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002)

1.1 Research problems

To address the need to understand the connection between technology and democracy, I adopted an interpretative research approach in a longitudinal case study. Interpretative research focuses on making sense of a complex situation as it emerges (Klein & Myers, 1999). In the first part of the longitudinal case study, a project named the Democracy Square was investigated. It was initiated by two regional (Aust- and West Agder counties) and one local municipality (Kristiansand municipality) in the southern part of Norway. The main feature was an online discussion forum for increased political discourse. The research focused on understanding the challenges occurring in such projects. Two major problems were identified, both related to the issues reported in the E-democracy literature presented above.

How can major objectives in E-democracy initiatives be identified?

This thesis will show that the purpose of the Democracy Square was poorly understood and not shared by major stakeholders. The project group apparently took for granted that underlying concepts of democracy were shared and well understood. However, the analysis shows that this was not the case. The main problem was a conflict of interest between major stakeholder groups.

To address this first problem I will draw on knowledge from the Democracy Model strand of research. Democracy models present characteristics of different democratic forms (which may appear in practice or be worked towards as ideal types). These models focus on objectives and characterizes different forms of democracy (see e.g., (Dahl, 1989; Held, 1996; Lively, 1975)). I will also show how democracy models allow comparisons between different empirical situations and stakeholder perceptions. Different democratic models can be found, based on characteristics like citizen's involvement, dominant democratic value and forms of political participation (Tops, Horrocks, & Hoff, 2000). However, existing literature on the subject appears to be rather fragmented, highlighting the need for a simplified categorization of the various democracy models for both comparison and analytical purposes. Thus, in this thesis four E-democracy models are developed and presented in chapter 4.

How can identified objectives be linked to information technology?

This thesis will also show that the link between the initial purposes of the Democracy Square project and the communication in the discussion forum were unclear. Analysis identified different communication patterns supported by different stakeholders. Only a few postings served the interest of both citizens and politicians. Therefore, I question if the design of the artefact responded to the project objectives. This led me to formulate the second research problem.

To address this second problem I will draw on knowledge of IT artefacts, genre of communication, and E-democracy models. IT-artefacts are characterised by the use of technology embedded in tasks and structures. I will argue that these elements can be addressed by genre perspectives on form (addressing technology in itself) and substance (addressing tasks and structures). IT-artefacts are also embedded in context, which I argue can be addressed by introducing the E-democracy model. These knowledge areas are presented and the link between them is discussed in chapter 5.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

First, the work is outlined in research literature and research problems are formulated. The research design is justified and the longitudinal case study is described. The research design is based on the problems identified from the literature review and the Democracy Square project.

Second, theoretical perspectives addressing the major challenges are presented. Four models of E-democracy are developed to address the first challenge (identifying objectives). Knowledge of IT artefacts, genres of communication and E-democracy models are bridged to address the second challenge (connect objectives and information technology).

Third, theoretical contributions are incorporated into a process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-democracy projects. The process is then explored in a second E-democracy project initiated by a local municipality involved in the Democracy Square project. The exploration allowed reflection on the suggested process.

Finally, the research contributions are summarized and suggestions are made for future research. The structure of the thesis is illustrated in figure 1.
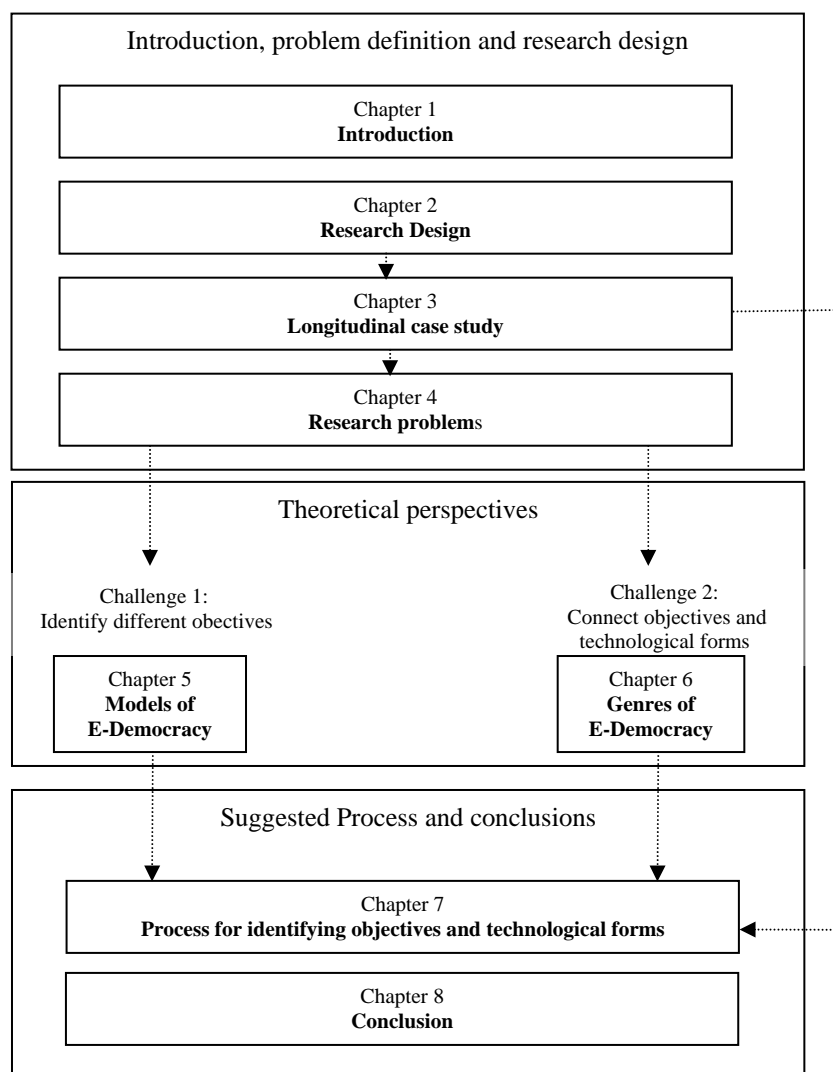
Figure 1 Structure of the thesis

2 Research design

The ontological basis for this PhD thesis and my view on the nature of reality is related to the position of inter realism (Walsham, 1995). By seeing reality as an inter-subjective construction, the nature of knowledge (the epistemological viewpoint) lies in the interconnection of facts and values and the construction of meaning made by each person in relation to others.

The research design of this thesis work can be explained through Vidgen and Braa's IS Research framework (figure 2), representing various intended research outcomes (Vidgen & Braa, 1997). The main research interest of the Democracy Square project was to give an interpretive approach to the nature of the discourse occurring in a discussion forum. The Democracy Square project added knowledge for increased understanding. To further explore the role of the discussion forum, a soft case study approach is applied. In the latter part of the longitudinal case study (the initiation of a second E-democracy project), an action case study was conducted. The action case study can be seen as a hybrid, combining perspectives of interpretation and intervention (Vidgen & Braa, 1997). In the initiation of the second E-democracy project, the action case approach focused on both understanding and change, Figure 2 (based on (Vidgen & Braa, 1997)) illustrates how the research outcomes differ between the two main empirical parts of this thesis.
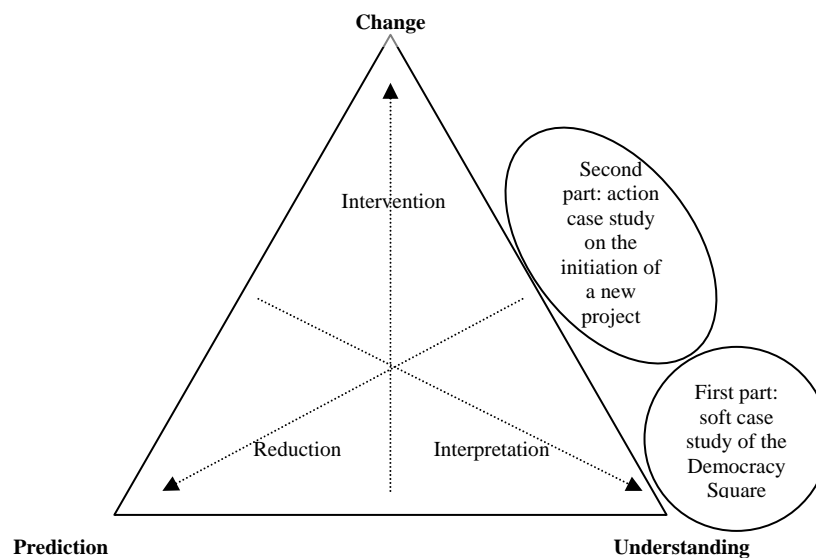
Figure 2 Intended research outcome from the empirical part of this research project

This research project is carried out by a multi-method approach, combining soft case and action case study designs. By combining different research methods, one is able to focus on different aspects of reality and therefore gain a richer understanding of a research topic (Mingers, 2001). The research area of E-democracy is still in its infancy and therefore exploratory studies are needed. Such studies captures reality in greater detail (Galliers, 1992). Identifying organizational challenges calls for an understanding through interpretation, while the evaluation of the suggested process requires some action in the organization studied, focusing on change through intervention (Vidgen & Braa, 1997). Explorative studies call for a multi-method approach, as argued by Pettigrew (1990, p. 279): "The research may begin with only a broad definition of the research problem which is sharpened by a complex and evolving mixture of literature analysis; data collection; internal discussion and memo writing amongst the research team; the uncovering of themes, patterns and propositions; followed by

more data collection, and more polished and structured thematic writing". Empirical studies are important in order to learn about the nature of current experiments, which are far from universally successful, and to gain the insights necessary to improve on them. Here, I combine a soft case study approach in the justification phase with an action case approach in the evaluation phase.

Theory development was needed to respond to the research problems identified in this thesis. Theories on democracy models (Held, 1996; Lively, 1975; Van Dijk, 2000) use varying characteristics in order to identify differences among democratic ideas, making a detailed comparison of the competing models difficult. Thus, four E-democracy models were developed. Knowledge from three strands of theories (IT-artefacts, genre of communication and the E-democracy models) are used to explain the link between overall objectives and technology.

2.1 The longitudinal case study

A longitudinal case study was conducted, focusing on two E-democracy initiatives in a local municipality (the Democracy Square project and the initiation of a new project). As shown in the E-democracy literature (presented in the previous chapter), there is a need for in-depth studies exploring the development on E-democracy initiatives. A case study focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings, and exploring theories that can be generated by combining different data collection methods (Eisenhardt, 1989). The phenomenon can be studied in a natural context, focusing on specific events rather than on clearly defined variables (Langley, 1999).

Because the research problems were not clearly defined or understood at the start of this project, an interpretative case study approach was needed (Klein & Myers, 1999). The interpretative case study approach involves substantial involvement in the research situation over a period of time. This results in a "thick" description and allows enough detail to permit analysis of the interpretations of the research subjects (Rose, 2000).

In the first part of this thesis, the development and use of the Democracy Square project was investigated. The project's principle interest was a discussion forum aimed to increase political discussion between citizens and politicians. The interpretative case study unveiled two problem areas (presented in chapter 4) and established an initial understanding of problems and challenges involved in developing the E-democracy project. The identified problems guided the following work. Figure 3 illustrates the initial research areas.
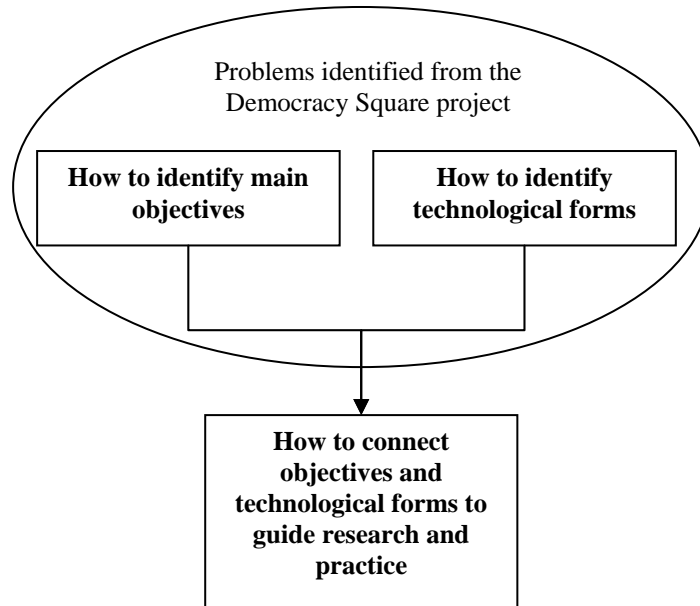
Figure 3 Research areas based on the Democracy Square project

Based on findings from the first development round and the theories developed, I suggest a process for identifying objectives and technological forms. The process was introduced in the initiation of a new E-democracy project in the Kristiansand municipality.

In order to explore the process in a real-life context, an action case study was conducted. Braa (1995, p. 150) characterises action case studies as "action components (that) reflect the potential for research to change organizations, resulting in changes to the social world. The case component reflects the understanding of findings in an organizational context". The action case approach is characterised by many facets: short duration, intervention in real-time, inclusion of case study elements to support understanding of domains, emphasis on small (quasi)-experiments in real life-settings, and reduced complexity and focus on changes on a small scale. For these reasons, the action case approach makes a good candidate for exploring the suggested process through a small scale study.

Data collection

The longitudinal case study was followed for 28 months from initiation to final analysis. Final analysis was based on the suggested process from the second initiated E-democracy project. Data collection was structured in different phases (see figure 4). Involvement in the development phase lasted approximately five months, from the initiation of the project until the discussion forum was launched. In phase two, the analyses were based on postings added in the discussion forum which lasted for 10 months until the discussion forum was terminated. In phase three, the analyses were presented to stakeholders in the case organization. A renewed interest for the E-democracy project emerged, resulting in phase four, the initiation of a new E-democracy project. The data collection ended after analysing the new initiative based on the previous suggested process.

Development of the Democracy Square	Use of the Democracy Square	Intervening phase	Initiation of a new E-democracy project
From initiation to launching of the Democracy Square	From launching to termination of the Democracy Square	From termination of the Democracy Square to initiation of a new project	From initiation to analysis of a new project

Timeline: 5 months 10 months 8 months 5 months

Figure 4 Data collection phases

Table 1 presents the data gathering activities in more detail. In addition, some activities were conducted that were not reported as part of this thesis. For example, users of the Democracy Square project and politicians (both users and non-users) were asked to give feedback on the project by an online questionnaire. The results were reported and presented to major stakeholders in the project, but are not reported in this thesis.

Phases	Activities	Participants	Documentation
Development of the Democracy Square	Initial meetings with project coordinator	Project coordinator	Audio-recorded and transcribed
	Observing project meeting	Project group	Agenda, minutes and notes from 6 half-day project-meetings
	Documentation collection	Project group	-Objectives for the project -Initial ideas and application for funding -Requirement analyses -Vendors' suggested solution -Press cuttings
	Observing demonstration of the suggested solution	Project group and steering committee	Personal notes, screen shots
	E-mail conversation	Project group	E-mails
	Interviews with politicians	Three politicians	Audio-taped interviews transcribed and sent back to politicians for validation
Use of the Democracy Square	Observing postings added in the discussion forum	All contributors at the Democracy Square	593 postings documented
	Observing system in use		Notes and screen shots
	Participation at an evaluation seminar	Project group	Agenda, minutes and notes
	Presenting an evaluation report	Project group and steering committee	My written summary
	E-mail conversation	Project group	E-mails
	Validation meeting: preliminary results presented	Project coordinator	Draft version of content analysis sent to stakeholders
Intervening Phase	Follow-up meetings	Project coordinator and other administrative personnel	Summary
	E-mail conversations	Project coordinator and vendor	E-mails
	Preparing validation: theories (from the literature reviews) discussed	Stakeholders in the case municipality	E-mails, notes from phone conversations
Initiation of a new project	Initial meetings with project coordinators to agree on roles	Project coordinators from the municipality	Summaries from 3 meetings and phone conversations
	E-mail discussions on project coordination	Project coordinators from the municipality	E-mails
	Preparing validation: presenting the suggested process	Project coordinators	Notes on feedback
	Interviews	6 politicians and 4 administrative personnel	10 hours of interviews audio-taped and transcribed
	Validation: reports on the analyses presented for the municipality	Decision makers in the municipality	Notes on feedback
	Validation: findings sent to the municipality for feedback	Project coordinator and other stakeholders in the municipality	E-mails and notes
	Validation: findings discussed with the vendor involved in the Democracy Square project	Representative from the vendor	Feedback report written by the representative and notes
	Participation in meetings preparing for political decision-making on future direction	Project coordinators and other administrative personnel	Agenda, minutes and notes

Table1. Data Collection Activities in the Longitudinal Case Study

Data Analysis

Data from earlier phases of the longitudinal case study have several purposes in this thesis. The longitudinal case study presented in chapter 3 is analyzed using multiple observations (see Table 1). The case study is reported in a descriptive and chronological way (Van der Blonk, 2003; Yin, 1994).

Entries in Democracy Square are exclusively textual and in principle form a document that can be analyzed by any recognized form of textual analysis. In addition, the postings show many of the characteristics of conversation, such as question and answer periods, thematic groupings, ordering, and obvious conversational devices, such as reference to previous postings and the opportunity to change the subject. The text is therefore suited to qualitative analysis, within a philosophical framework of hermeneutics, and genre analysis. Content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Silverman, 2001) is chosen as the analysis method. Content analysis provides a relatively systematic and comprehensive summary or overview of the dataset as a whole (Wilkinson, 1997). It operates by observing repeated themes and categorizes them using a coding system.

The thematic analysis of the data was performed using ATLAS.ti®, a conventional qualitative analysis tool. The analysis took two approaches: one theoretical, one grounded. The principle purpose of the theoretical analysis was to discover which models of democracy underpin the forum discourse, and whether differences exist between politicians and citizens. Postings or text passages typically require some interpretation before they can be allocated to a category. Multiple allocations (allocation to more than one category) were allowed.

The grounded analysis is more qualitative in nature. Here, the text was examined in detail, first for more specific textual evidence of adherence to the political models and second for repeated types of postings and interactions. Communication patterns here were derived in a grounded manner from the text (rather than from a theoretical source), giving the opportunity for a more qualitative style of detailed analysis designed to display important features of the interaction. The resulting communication patterns were then iteratively used as thematic categories and the text recoded so that their frequency could be counted. This analysis both triangulates the earlier theoretical analysis and reveals more details about the interactions.

The second development round was initiated during the summer of 2005; the data gathering period ended in February of 2006. Utilizing an action case approach, the study combined the development and justification of the suggested process. The major data source was obtained from conversations with major stakeholders. Other sources included project documents, e-mail correspondence and minutes from project meetings. Ten people appointed by the executive officer in the project were interviewed. These people held key positions related to the forthcoming E-democracy project. Six were local politicians and four were employed in the local municipality.

The conversations lasted 55-75 minutes and were audiotaped and transcribed. In order to translate transcribed words into data analysis, three processes were used: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Since the action case study focuses explicitly on knowledge of and reflection on the suggested process, the data reductions were conducted by coding raw data into categories of the suggested process and onto reflections of how the processes were achieved by the participants. Quotes from the participants are presented to show the data display (only a few quotations are presented in this

summary, see paper 6 for more). The organized assembly of information that conclusions are drawn from are presented as well.

The first part of the conversations focuses on existing practices and experiences and challenges related to the dialogue between politicians, public administration and citizens. The suggested process (see chapter 7) was then introduced and explained by the researcher. The participants were asked to analyze their initiated project based on the suggested process. Lastly, participants were asked to reflect on the suggested process itself and its usefulness by introducing it in the initiation of their E-democracy project.

2.2 Theoretical contributions

The first major theoretical contribution of this thesis is the four E-democracy models presented in chapter 5. The E-democracy models were developed based on both theoretical literature research discussing democracy models and reported E-democracy cases. The identified literature on democracy models was read to identify common characteristics. Reported E-democracy cases were also read and classified according to the democracy model literature. This process identified some reported cases which were not accounted for in the theoretical discussion of democracy models. Thus, a new democracy model was needed to be able to explain and compare all reported cases in regard to the theoretical framework. To simplify the comparison, four E-democracy models were developed based on two major characteristics (arguments for why these characteristics are selected can be found in chapter 5 and paper 2). Both the theoretical literature and reported E-democracy cases were then read a second time and re-classified towards the four E-democracy models (reflected in chapter 5 and appendix 2). The iterative reading process allowed reflection and learning on the four E-democracy models.

The second major theoretical contribution in this thesis is the use of three theoretical strands of research to explain the link between objectives and technological forms in E-democracy projects. The bridging is explained in chapter 6. First, objectives for E-democracy projects were identified by the four E-democracy models. Second, the communication genre perspective was introduced. The genre perspective has been used by others (e.g. (Honkaranta, 2003; Ihlström, 2004)) to investigate communication patterns and had also showed a promising potential to identify various communication patterns in the Democracy Square project. Third, knowledge on the technology itself was found in the research strand of IT artefacts. Thus, knowledge from these three different strands of research formed the basis for the theoretical contribution of connecting objectives to technological forms in E-democracy projects. To illustrate the explanatory potential of the suggested theory, reported E-democracy cases were analyzed to identify genres for E-democracy reported in the literature. These are reported in chapter 6.

Both theoretical contributions presented above are based on literature reviews on reported E-democracy cases. The review complies with a method similar to the one suggested by Swan, Scarbrough, and Preston (1999) and later used by Andersen and Henriksen (2005). Comprehensive online databases were used: ISI Web of Science, EBSCO Host, Sage Publication, IEEE Xplore, Communication of AIS and ACM Digital Library. The following keywords were used: E-democracy, digital democracy, electronic democracy, Democracy and Internet, Democracy and Information systems.

In addition to articles in journals, academic conference papers were included (conference proceedings without academic references were excluded). The initial screening excluded

conceptual papers (apart from reviews) lacking empirical evidence and articles with only a peripheral reference to E-democracy. The issues of e-voting, digital divide and IT and development were also excluded from the review. Apart from recognizing the extensive visibility of e-voting in the existing body of literature in general (see (Altman & Klass, 2005), an extensive review of the characteristics of e-voting technology was not included. Moreover, a great proportion of e-voting research focuses on technical constructions and legal aspects of the usage of the technology, instead of reporting on actual implementations of e-voting systems in societies. The issue of the digital divide is sometimes mentioned in relation to E-democracy when discussing the challenges of guaranteeing access to digital information and democracy applications. I consider the research strands of the digital divide and IT and development to be research areas by themselves and being outside the scope of my research.

The number of reportings increased during the reading of the articles by using citation indices (using ISI Web of Science Citation Index) and by following references in the identified literature to other literature not identified previously in the paper selection process.

2.3 Validity concerns

This section briefly discusses some important issues related to the validity of both the interpretation of data from the longitudinal case and the selection of theory strands that formed the background for the theoretical contributions made in this thesis.

The longitudinal case study

The longitudinal case study can be evaluated by Klein and Myer's (1999) principles for interpretative field studies. These principles are not meant as a fixed standard for all interpretative studies to follow. However, the principles can guide justification and evaluation of these interpretative field studies and descriptions can be made on how these guidelines were followed.

The principle of the hermeneutic circle is fundamental to many principles, suggesting that human understanding is achieved by iterating between the meaning of parts and the meaning of the whole (Klein & Myers, 1999). In this thesis, findings from the longitudinal case study were shown to be related to developed theories. Findings from the Democracy Square project, for example, led to theory development (see chapter 5 and 6), which was again explored by an action case approach in the longitudinal case study. These interactions were illustrated in section 2.1.

The principle of contextualization requires reflection on the social and historical background of the research setting in order to examine how the situation emerged (Klein & Myers, 1999). The longitudinal case study is described in detail in chapter 3. The social and historical background is investigated through interviews, project documents and observation (e.g., project meetings). The contextual description is a balance between information richness and available space for describing the longitudinal case. I have attempted to add enough detail for others to follow my arguments on the important challenges and findings from the longitudinal case. I also describe some historical background that I find interesting. For example, project documents and interviews highlight the local municipality's tradition of focusing on open dialogue and communication. E-democracy projects are therefore seen as a natural step following this tradition.

The principle of interaction requires reflection on how research materials are socially constructed through interplay between researcher and participant (Klein & Myers, 1999). In

the longitudinal case study, I interacted with participants by getting involved in project group meetings for several months, by interviewing participants several times (discussing how to interpret findings), and by sending transcripts, initial interpretations and drafts of my publications to the participants, allowing them to give criticism and comments. I received only a limited amount of feedback on written materials sent to the participants (such as transcripts and drafts of research contributions). I received more valuable feedback by discussing findings personally with the participants. I also wrote project reports (focusing less on my research) which were discussed by participants. These provided invaluable feedback.

The principle of abstraction and generalization requires relating data interpretation to general concepts that describe the nature of human understanding and social action (Klein & Myers, 1999). To illustrate the generalization of the findings from the longitudinal case to the theoretical contributions discussed in this thesis, data quotations from interviews and examples of postings from the Democracy Square are included in this summary and in the thesis papers. The interpretation of the data is described (for example by presenting coding schemas) and findings are discussed in relation to theoretical contributions.

The principle of dialogical reasoning requires the researcher to confront the preconceptions that guided the original research design (Klein & Myers, 1999). My preconceptions are presented in the introductory part of this chapter.

The principle of multiple interpretations requires the researcher to look at the possibility that there will be contradictions between the theoretical preconceptions and the actual findings (Klein & Myers, 1999). Some problem areas (described in chapter 4) arose in the Democracy Square project, where there were disparate viewpoints between citizens and politicians. In the latter part of the longitudinal case study, stakeholders made comments on the suggested process in initiating a new project (chapter 7) and on the theoretical preconceptions explored in the suggested process.

The principle of suspicion requires sensitivity to possible biases and systematic distortions in the collected narratives and in the data analyses (Klein & Myers, 1999). Such biases or distortions are not explicitly addressed in detail here in the same way as are studies more influenced by critical theories. The principle is implicitly addressed by the fact that biases expressed in the narratives are evaluated against each other. For example, in the study of the Democracy Square project, typical communication patterns were identified. Then, all the postings from the discussion forum were analysed to figure out whether the identified pattern represented a unique instance or a repetitive communication pattern.

The theoretical contributions

Concerns on the validity of the literature reviews can be raised. First, there is the problem of capturing research relevant to the conclusions that is not indexed in search engines or captured by an iterative collection of research reports. The collection of the literature should therefore not be considered as a comprehensive representation of the whole E-democracy field. Second, the research methods in the selected material vary, challenging comparison and generalisation when the findings were aggregated. Third, academic rigor was less emphasized in the selection of literature sources (except for rejecting articles without any references to other research). In the young field of E-democracy, the number of reports published in quality journals is limited, making a review of this literature difficult. In choosing between quality (by only investigating journal articles) or number of reports (by including conference

proceedings), the latter was selected. Finally, the review was restricted to only English language sources, which may reduce the diversity of topics and geographical areas studied.

To summarize this section, I illustrate how the longitudinal case study was guided by Klein and Myer's (1999) principles, and I comment on concerns of the validity of the literature reviews that form the basis for the theoretical contributions made. Within these limits, I believe that the review process provides a constructive basis for analyzing the current state of the field, contributing to the field by accumulating findings and pointing to further implications for research and practice.

2.4 The individual papers

This thesis is based on six papers, either published, accepted for publication or submitted to journals or international conferences with peer review. Figure 5 maps the individual papers to the corresponding research areas identified in the Democracy Square project. Table 2 contains references to these thesis papers.
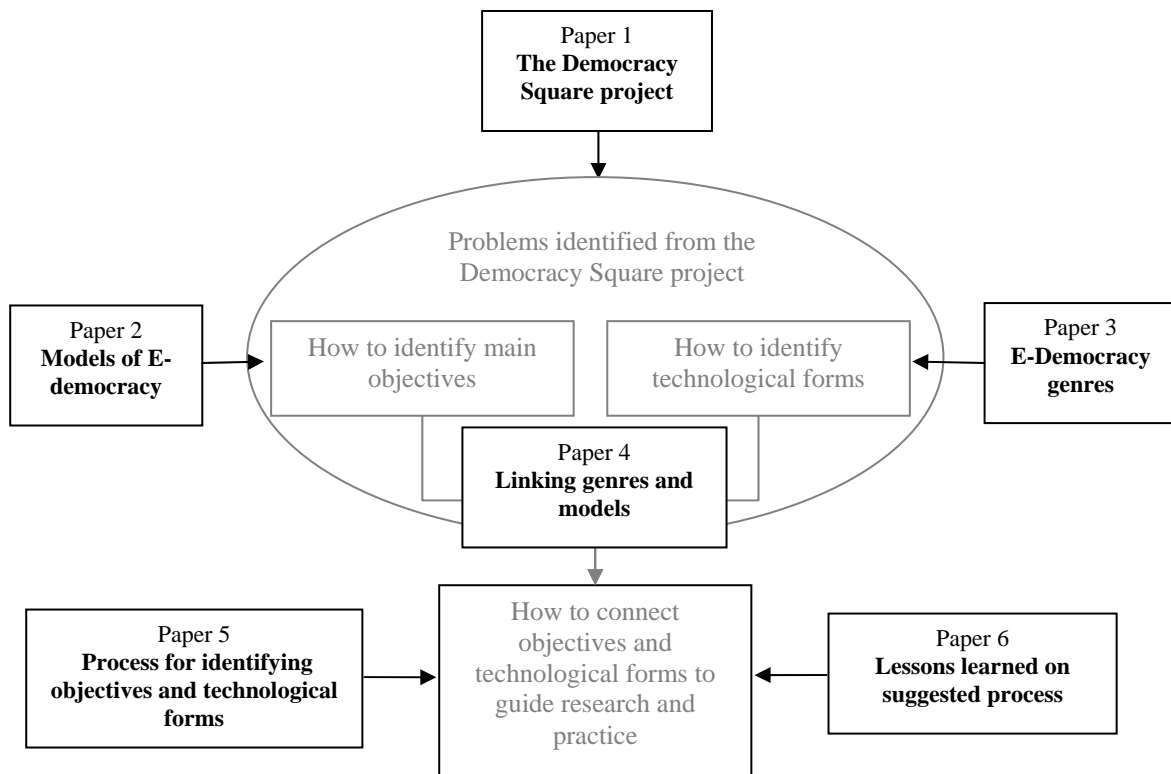

Figure 5. Focus of research papers

Nr	Paper	Published
1	Rose, J. and Sæbø, Ø. (2005). Democracy Squared: designing online political communities to accommodate conflicting interests	Scandinavian Journal of Information Systems (SJIS), Vol 17, no 2, pp 133-168.
2	Päivärinta, T. and Sæbø, Ø. (2006). Models of E-democracy	Communication of Association of Information Systems (CAIS) Vol 17, pp 818-840.
3	Sæbø, Ø. and Päivärinta, T. (2006). Defining the "E" in E-democracy: a genre lens on IT artefacts	Accepted for publishing at the 29th Information Systems Research Seminar in Scandinavia (IRIS), Helsingoer, Denmark
4	Päivärinta, T. and Sæbø, Ø. (2005). Being specific on E-democracy by explicit identification of democracy models and communication genres	4th International EGOV Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, 2005, pp. 185-197. Electronic Government, Workshop and Poster proceedings of the Fourth International EGOV Conference
5	Sæbø Ø (2006). A process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E- Democracy projects	Accepted for publishing at the AMCIS conference 2006, Acapulco, Mexico
6	Sæbø Ø (2006). How to identify objectives and technological forms in E-democracy projects; learning from an action case study	An earlier version was presented at the 3rd Scandinavian workshop on E-Government, Kristiansand Norway, February 2006. Submitted for the 15th International conference on Information System Development Budapest, Hungary. Published in AUC's preprint series, article 1, 2006.

Table 2 Overview of research papers

Paper 1: Democracy Square: designing online political communities to accommodate conflicting interests

This paper analyzes the Democracy Square project during the first ten months of its inception. Content analyses of postings in the discussion forum were conducted. The analyses identified differences between citizens and politicians. Citizens engaged politicians in discourse in order to set agendas and influence political decision-making, whereas politicians set out to demonstrate their specialist/elite abilities through rational argumentation and to broadcast their policies to a broad range of voters. Further analysis on communication patterns in the forum underlined these differences. The analysis gave insight into the nature of discourse in the discussion forum but did not identify how to translate this insight into principles on how to guide design and development of future E-democracy initiatives.

The analyses of the Democracy Square project form the basis for the two problem areas in this thesis. First, the identified differences between major stakeholders question the extent to which objectives are understood and shared, and point to the need for identifying and comparing the different objectives. The second problem centers on how such insight can be used to develop and design information technology to link identified objectives and technology. The two problem areas are discussed in chapter 4. Finally, the paper describes the development and use of the Democracy Square project, which is reported as the first part of the longitudinal case description in the next chapter.

Paper 2: Models of E-democracy

In this paper democracy models and E-democracy implementations are reviewed. Based on these reviews, the need for a model generally absent from contemporary theoretical literature is identified - the Partisan E-democracy model. Thus, four simplified models of E-democracy

are presented (the Liberal, the Deliberative, the Partisan, and the Direct). The theoretical potential of these four models is illustrated by analyzing the implementation of a communication technology for E-democracy and a web-based discussion forum.

Based on the analyses, there appears to be a need for specific democracy models in connection to IT use for E-democracy. However, these specific models can not be applied to a particular medium or technology of E-democracy in general unless the actual democratic ideals and particular communication forms and purposes supporting those ideals are explicitly defined in context.

Thus, paper 2 contributes theoretically to the first problem area addressed in this thesis: how to identify main objectives for E-democracy projects. The E-democracy models, made up of stereotypical forms of democracy (in practice or as ideal forms), make it possible to then study actual stakeholder perceptions in specific E-democracy projects. This paper forms the background for chapter 5 in this thesis.

Paper 3: Defining the "E" in E-democracy: a genre lens on IT artefacts

Paper 3 presents a theoretical approach to bridging knowledge between IT artefacts, genres of communication and E-democracy models and investigates how information technology acts differently in different situations. IT artefacts can be characterised by the technology itself which is embedded in tasks, structures and contexts. Genres focus on form and substance, addressing the technology (form) and the tasks and the structures (substance). E-democracy models identify the contexts that IT artefacts are embedded in. Genres for the E-democracy models are identified from E-democracy projects and initiatives reported in research reports. Introducing the genre perspective and the E-democracy models helps to explain how IT artefacts differ for different E-democracy models.

Paper 3 contributes to my thesis in two ways. First, a theoretical contribution is made which addresses the second problem area in this thesis (how to link objectives to information technology) by combining knowledge on information technology, communication genres and E-democracy models. Second, genres for the E-democracy models are identified from the E-democracy literature. The review provides a basis for more cumulative research efforts and structured practice. Previous research is systematically analyzed according to democracy ideals and genres. This paper provides the basis for the theories presented in Chapter 6.

Paper 4: Identification of democracy models and communication genres

Paper 4 presents a framework for E-democracy research and practice, as reflected by the literature of E-democracy models (presented in paper 2) and the theories of genres of communication (presented in paper 3). The framework discusses E-democracy models according to the initiators of communicative action in democratic discourse and their relation to the decision-making processes.

Analyses of web-based discussion forums used in different E-democracy initiatives illustrate the explanatory potential of the framework to discuss the relationship between new communication methods and the development of democracy. The analyses show that a particular medium, such as a discussion forum, can be meaningfully used in relation to any preferred model of E-democracy. Further, the framework of E-democracy models and genre theory is able to make distinctions between the discussions about how to utilise certain media for E-democracy. It shows that genre-related issues are needed for clarifying particular uses of technology for E-democracy in a particular context.

Paper 4 contributes to my thesis in three ways. First, the paper illustrates how linking E-democracy models and genre perspectives can allow for evaluation of reported research contributions. By analysing discussion forums from E-democracy initiatives, the analytical potential of the framework is illustrated. Secondly, the analyses illustrate how one technology (the discussion forum) works differently under various contexts (different E-democracy models). This underscores the need for investigating technology in its surroundings. This is discussed in the introductory part of chapter 6. Thirdly, the paper proposes a preliminary link between the E-democracy models and the genre of communication perspective. The framework suggested in this paper is later elaborated in the suggested process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-democracy projects, presented in paper 5.

Paper 5: A process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-democracy initiatives

This article addresses the two major problems identified in this thesis (chapter 4). Based on the E-democracy models (chapter 5) and the E-democracy genres (chapter 6), a two-phase process was developed to guide practice by identifying objectives and genres in E-democracy projects. The process begins with a discussion of the main objectives of the initiated E-democracy project. Then a list of possible E-democracy genres (presented in chapter 6) is developed to act as a starting point to discuss what kind of communication patterns the project should support.

The suggested process is reported in the first part of chapter 7 and serves as an initial attempt to guide practice based on the theoretical contributions of E-democracy models and genres for E-democracy.

Paper 6: How to identify objectives and technological forms in E-democracy projects: learning from an action case study

This paper reports on the action case study built on the process suggested in paper 5. The action case study showed the importance of linking E-democracy genres to the initiated project. Introducing E-democracy models initiated discussion of the objectives of the project before focusing directly on the technology, which was found to be a weakness in other E-democracy projects. Participants' reflections on the usefulness of the process supported the claim that a connection between overall objectives and technological forms is needed in the initiation of new E-democracy projects.

Paper 6 shows the importance of using the suggested process in a real world E-democracy initiative. Knowledge on how to change and improve the suggested process is also outlined noting the reflections and comments made by the participants in the action case study.

3 The longitudinal case study

3.1 Development of the Democracy Square

In 2003, the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion granted funding for a project which would foster "electronic dialogue between politicians and citizens". The project, initiated by Kristiansand city and East- and West-Agder counties, was named the Democracy Square Project (www.Demokratitorget.no, now terminated). The principle interest of the project was to establish a discussion forum for said parties. Kristiansand, with approximately 76,000 inhabitants, is regarded as the regional capital of the southern region of Norway. East- and West-Agder covers 16,400 km^2 and has approximately 265,000 inhabitants (including Kristiansand).

The project was initiated approximately seven months before a local and regional election. Project documents outline the background for the project. The project was initiated in an attempt to allow electors to participate in and influence political decision-making processes and legitimize the autonomy of the local areas, thereby avoiding decreased voter participation. The project proposed to ensure that information broadcasted to electors was correct. This was achieved by providing direct information exchange between politicians and citizens. To this end, digital distribution was used since traditional paper based broadcasting would have proved to be too costly. IT was used as a way to broadcast information and also as a forum for one-on-one communication between politicians and citizens.

The objectives formulated by administrative personnel in the Kristiansand municipality when they applied to the Ministry for funding were:
1) To establish an electronic meeting place where politicians could engage citizens in an open and digitally supported dialogue. The meeting place would run as a pilot in advance of the election.
2) To identify areas where new IT-based solutions would strengthen citizen's opportunities to participate in political processes.
3) To develop plans for at least one follow-up project.

The funding body stipulated that the project would involve collaboration with other public authorities. Experiences and outcomes of the project would also be made available to others who would benefit from this knowledge. East- and West Agder counties were invited to participate and Agder University College was asked to evaluate the project for the project group. The project group was responsible for the development, launching and marketing. The group included representatives from the three public authorities and the educational sector (as young people were seen to be especially important in the process), a vendor located in the region and representatives from Agder University College. A steering committee was also established to be responsible for the management of the project group.

The project group started their work in March of 2003. To begin with, the project manager (an employee of Kristiansand municipality) outlined the different roles for each group member, estimated the time-demand for each member and described the objectives of the project in detail. The project group did not develop political information but was responsible for broadcasting and disseminating information to others. The main objectives of the project were to increase voter participation, compared to the previous election and to increase interest in politics in general, particularly for citizens aged 18 to 22.

The project group signed a contract for the development of the site with a software firm headquartered in Kristiansand, whose focus areas included E-democracy software implementation. The contract was made without a formal call for tenders. A representative from this software firm was a member of the project group and contributed by knowledge about design and contracting.

Due to time constraints (seven months from project initiation until the election), the project group was not able to discuss main objectives for the E-democracy project in detail before concentrating on the technical concerns. As an example, a project group meeting a month after initiation discussed first a prototype, then outlined requirement specifications, and finally the interpretation of E-democracy and what to achieve by the initiated project.

Discussions in the project group focused mainly on two issues. First they discussed strategies of how to get citizens to participate. Politicians were considered more or less committed to participate. They had an opportunity to get instructions and help on how to use the developed solution, but less attention was given to motivate politicians to participate, except from informing parties about progress during the project development. Young people were considered a major target group and attention was paid to inform students through the school system. Marketing material was actually distributed to colleges in the area. Later, it was discovered that only a small amount of this material was distributed to the students. No formal analysis was conducted to explore why this happened, but project members thought part of the explanation could be the period when the material was distributed (just before summer holidays when students have their exams) and that the marketing material was distributed to principals, not to the teachers who actually had to distribute the material to the students. The project group also discussed what kinds of services young people would like to have. No youth were included in these discussions. Thus, discussants were, as stated by a member of the group, "on thin ice". When the site was launched, advertisements were put in regional newspapers and the project covered by regional radio and television channels.

Second, the group focused on the technical solution. After a few months, the vendor presented a description of their ideas. The vendor saw this project as a pilot for their forthcoming priority in the E-democracy field. Their description formulated objectives and background slightly different than the project group had done previously. For example, the Internet was now seen as an "old and less flexible communication channel" and the "primary communication channel (for the Democracy Square) is therefore SMS". Young people have also, according to their views, "high standard of living, nothing to complain about and only a minor desire to influence or change the society".

Due to delays, the prototype was only first introduced to the project group at the end of July, which was less than two months before the election. Still, technical flaws remained and further development was required. The design of Democracy Square was not discussed further in detail by the entire project group before it was launched in August of 2003.

3.2 Use of the Democracy Square

The Democracy Square forum was set up with 25 discussion categories which included subjects of expected local political interest (figure 6). The categories were formed from suggestions made by developers from the software firm and were then later discussed by the project group.

Responses to the postings peaked during the local election but declined to little or nothing thereafter. During the 26 days before the election, 525 postings were added; only 68 postings were made in the 269 days after the election. More than half of the responses were posted by politicians (more details on the Democracy square project can be found in paper 1).

The politically themed debates were mainly concerned with issues of local and national interest. However, one discussion targeted democracy and the Internet itself. Contributors agreed that dialog was important. A commentator in one of the debates summed up one of the forum's dilemmas:

> *"I agree with Esben that dialog is important. However there will be a problem if it turns out that the political candidates don't take it (the Democracy Square) seriously, but just consider it a kind of exercise in democracy"* (Nickname 15-08-03) (all quotations are translated from the original Norwegian)

Some early issues about the forum concerned the practical operation of the forum, both at the technical level (some complaints about navigation speed) and at the level of policy and social convention. One contributor was enraged that some of his critical comments were posted but were never displayed – he assumed they had been censured. The board moderators denied this accusation, although they did retain the right to censure "inappropriate" material in general. It remained unclear as to what had happened to this message. The forum then addressed ethical questions in regard to admissions (i.e. how challenging, rude or offensive a contribution could be). Here is an example of a response to an offensive contribution:

> *"I can't really say that I appreciate your way of making your point, but …….".* (Full name (Progress party), 20-08-03)

The project was evaluated by the project group in the autumn of 2003. The decision-makers seemed generally to believe in the future and potential of the site. However, after the election, activity at the site dwindled, with many discussions fizzling out in unanswered questions. The discussion board is now suspended.

Figure 6. Categorization of the debates at Democracy Square online site

3.3 The intervening phase

After the Democracy Square project was terminated, little activity took place for several months until a new project was initiated. Several reasons may explain the limited activities at this time. The project owners felt the project had not been as successful as had initially been anticipated, and they had limited motivation in initiating new projects. Collaboration between the three local authorities was not ideal. Many discussions at the Democracy Square project focused on issues concerning local matters in the Kristiansand municipality, rather than on issues related to the regional authority level. The election in September 2003 had been a major milestone for the Democracy Square. After the suspension of the project, no local elections were in sight, the next one not being for 3 years (in September 2007). Finally, there was also no more funding from the government, and local and regional politicians did not seem inclined to spend resources for further development of E-democracy initiatives.

Despite limited interest, a follow-up project was initiated by Kristiansand municipality. Developing plans for at least one follow-up project was required as part of the Democracy Square project. Further development was also supported by the vendor company involved in Democracy Square with collaboration from Agder University College. Funding was finally granted to Kristiansand municipality, Agder University College and the vendor company from a regional fund in order to continue work on projects in the E-democracy field: "to become the driving force in the E-democracy area in Norway".

Despite funding and plans for upcoming projects, only minimum activity took place for several months. The vendor company, being a driving force in the ongoing collaboration, decided to move their headquarters out of the region. Although the expertise on E-democracy was still located in Kristiansand, the move caused uncertainty for future collaboration. The Kristiansand municipality decided to discuss the issues with citizens and politicians in a more holistic way before continuing to work on E-democracy projects. An ad-hoc committee (called the Dialogue committee) was established to work on how to support dialogue in various areas. Grants from the regional fund were suspended due to uncertainties about future development.

3.4 Initiation of a new project

A second development project was initiated by the municipality in the summer of 2005. The initiated project is described in more detail in paper 6 and as of now, is still in a development phase.

Based on analyses made, the Dialogue committee decided to focus on "the internet as a facilitator for increased political participation". The committee described Kristiansand as a municipality amenable to open dialogue. E-democracy initiatives were seen as a natural step toward following this dialogue. The municipality was granted funding from the county governor to work on E-democracy initiatives in the region. Even though these grants were not directly connected to the initiated project, awareness and focus on the E-democracy project increased. The future of the vendor company was clarified (they continue their focus on developing E-democracy services in Kristiansand), and the collaboration with Agder University College continued. As well, other municipalities in the area initiated new E-democracy projects. Lessons could therefore be learned by investigating these initiatives.

Current challenges for dialogue between citizens and politicians

In interviews with politicians and administrative personnel, the importance of politicians being accessible to citizens was emphasized. According to these interviews, politicians consider themselves accessible to citizens and maintain that the input they receive provides them with an important source of new information. However, politicians need to filter information received to figure out what is most valuable. More details on such challenges are reported in paper 6.

Two challenges for getting valuable input from citizens were emphasized by the interviewees. First, it was difficult to get input on issues not directly related to the particular citizen. People are inclined to be interested in issues of immediate concern to them rather than issues of a general nature. Second, politicians get more input from some groups than from others which mean these groups get more representation than other groups. For example, young people, groups concerned with disability issues and elderly people seem less active than other more high profile groups. This means it is important to reach these types of groups so they can communicate their concerns to politicians and the public administration and they can be afforded the opportunity to succeed as well.

Initial objective on what to achieve by the initiated project

Different objectives for the forthcoming E-democracy initiatives were explored by the interviewees. Objectives noted were:
- developing services to work as a voice-tube for citizens
- offering public information
- developing better services for all citizens
- reaching new target groups
- developing new services to make life easier for citizens or politicians

There were also contradictory ideas on how to deal with perceived contributions. While some focused on the potential to empower citizens by real influence, others emphasized the importance of a representative democracy where elected politicians maintain their sovereignty.

The interviewees deliberated on whether different target groups should be emphasised. Young people were considered important by some, while others questioned the idea of addressing this group more than others. Other target groups of specific interest were elderly people and those that were not mobile.

Further development

Based on the report from the Dialogue Committee, the Kristiansand municipality decided to continue their focus on E-democracy projects: "to become a pilot municipality for testing and developing methods in the E-democracy area". The report focused on several issues. External driving forces like government initiatives and initiatives developed by other public authorities were identified. Changes in local democracy were addressed. For example, there appeared to be a decreased interest in voter participation and party politics, and an increased interest in ad-hoc participation on individual issues. The importance of communicating in new ways or in new arenas was also noted.

By January 2006, the Kristiansand municipal executive committee decided to:
1. Establish net-meetings between politicians and citizens as a pilot study by the year 2006.

2. Develop the technical arrangements of information needed to contribute to openness in political processes.
3. Continue collaboration with regional participants to increase voter turnout for the local municipal election in 2007.
4. Invite Agder University College and other related stakeholders to develop projects where Kristiansand could act as a pilot municipality.

Data collecting activities related to this thesis ended in February 2006.

4 Problem formulations

This chapter presents the two major problems addressed in this thesis and how they were identified. More detailed analyses on postings from the Democracy Square project (which form the basis for the identified problems) can be found in paper 1.

4.1 How can major objectives in E-democracy initiatives be identified

By analysing postings on the Democracy Square's discussion forum, I identified a problem that could broadly be described as a conflict of interest between politicians and citizens. To illustrate these differences, two postings and how they were interpreted are presented in table 3.

Posting	Interpretation
"This is one of the very few forums where every voter has the opportunity to ask critical questions and get answers from the politicians in the municipality. If Democracy is to survive, it is important that electors engage themselves in important issues and use their power in elections instead of being disenfranchised by not using their right to vote " (Politician, full name and party)	Focus on the citizen-politician connection with questions and answers. However, the citizens are asking the questions, and the specialist/expert politicians have the answers. Citizens' primary task is confined to voting and thereby indirectly influencing politics. Citizen engagement is seen as the route to participation in elections.
"I think all Norwegian citizens should have free medical, dental and other necessary health care in Norway (cosmetic and other luxury things should be paid for). This will obviously cost money and should be introduced gradually. We'll start with free access for everyone under 20 and over 65 (more suggestions for the organisation and introduction of free health care) *"(Citizen, given name)*	Suggestions for societal improvements from a citizen expressed in debate forum. Implied desire to engage in political process and influence decision-making through agenda setting and idea generation. Implication that public debate forums are an important part of political process and political opinion forming.

Table 3 Example of postings on the Democracy Square and how they are interpreted

Politicians seem to focus on a desire to demonstrate expertise in political matters to a broad range of voters. Citizens seem more interested in engaging politicians in discourse in order to set agendas, influence political decision-making and affect election results. The analysis showed that only a few postings supported both politicians' and citizens' views to the point where the needs of both groups would be served.

Many conversations posted did not successfully promote the interests of either politicians or citizens. The project group responsible for Democracy Square apparently took for granted that people's perceptions of the underlying concepts of democracy and their participation in the political process were shared and understood by all involved. The group felt the discussion forum was a suitable and un-problematic communication infrastructure for this type of discourse. The analyses showed that this was not always the case.

In the E-democracy literature the absence of people's connection between technology and democracy is given as an explanation of the often modest impact E-democracy initiatives have on public participation (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003). Technology is often simplistically coupled to direct democracy, ignoring the need to understand how IT directly affects the democratic process (Bellamy & Taylor, 1998; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000). Løfgren (2000) states that "We seldom find consideration on the way which the use of new technology might affect democracy" (p. 57). Schmidtke (1998) discusses the impact IT has on democratic decision-making processes and looks at reasons for the restricted success of E-democracy projects. Tops, Horrock and Hoff (2000) concluded in their investigation of

Danish political parties that: "Political parties appear to have entered the world of new technology without any predefined or explicit strategy concerning the ways in which the use of new technology might affect democracy". Aidemark (2003) states that "The important lesson is that there is no simple connection between the problems of democracy and the IT-based systems that are supposed to be supportive (of democracy). It is the intention and strategies behind the democratic processes that are important" (p. 155). There is a greater need to address the objectives, strategies and processes involved instead of simply focusing on technological concerns (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Grönlund, 2003; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000; Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002). Thus, I argue that there is a need to focus on the connection between the overall objectives of the E-democracy project and the technology involved in reaching those objectives. This connection can be enhanced by developing IT-based E-democracy services.

Based on the findings from the Democracy Square project and reported E-democracy initiatives, I question whether varying objectives from different stakeholders become obstacles for achieving the purposes of E-democracy initiatives. In the Democracy Square project, identified differences between different groups appear to meet stakeholders' needs unsatisfactorily. If, as indicated by findings from the Democracy Square and the E-democracy literature, unshared objectives among different stakeholders are obstacles for use, I argue there is a need to gain more knowledge on how to identify different objectives for E-democracy projects.

4.2 How to link identified objectives to information technology

The next point of exploration is to decide whether a better understanding of the political discourse in the Democracy Square project could lead to a better design and to better management of the project. This ultimately could lead to the establishment of a thriving virtual political community. Politicians and citizens could be offered more specific communication tools that would be tailored to assist them in expressing their interests in a political discourse.

In the Democracy Square project, the link between the purpose of the project and the exchange in the discussion forum was not clear. The analysis identified different communication patterns supported by different stakeholders, as illustrated in table 4. Communication expectations for some stakeholders were not met in the discussion forum. Only a few postings served the interest of both citizens and politicians. Therefore, there is some question as to whether the design of the artefact (the discussion forum) met the needs of the overall objectives of the project.

Conflicting interests between major stakeholders might be seen as reasonably fundamental principles associated with advanced democracies. The findings from this project stress the need to further study how to link information technology to the main objectives of E-democracy projects in general.

Communication pattern	Characteristics
The Challenge and Riposte	Criticism of or concern about political events, decisions or persons voiced by citizens who express their opinions using a challenging, sometimes aggressive tone. The expressed opinion is often followed by a more or less controversial, sometimes rhetorical question. Politicians rebut or deny the criticism using rational argument and factual examples (emphasising their role as elite/specialists). In addition they often comment on the citizens' tone – suggesting that it should be more reasonable, less emotional and more concrete or factual. They often try to close the debate, offering invitation for further discussion.
The Political Manifesto	Politicians act as spokespersons for their party, giving the party's message for the solution to a political problem or debate. No invitation to continue the debate is offered, and the debate often ends.
The Rational Issue Debate	Politicians discuss an issue (as if in front of an audience of citizens). The tone is rational, using reasoned argument, and introduces many factual examples and expert knowledge (effectively excluding the average citizen). The politicians refer to each other's points and political affiliations, using first names, giving the impression of an elite club.
The Respectful Question and Answer	Citizens generate questions about issues of concern (agenda setting) but use a respectful tone that acknowledges the expert status of the politician. The politicians reply in a factual way. The answer often includes a description of what the party has done or will do to fix the problem. This genre can also be framed the other way round, with politicians asking for information or opinions from citizens in order to help frame their (expert) judgments.
The Unanswered Question	A citizen formulates a (respectful) question in order to address an issue (which they consider important) on the agenda, but no politician comes forward to answer it, and the debate ends.

Table 4. Communication patterns identified from postings of the Democracy Square

By exploring these communication patterns, three sub-areas can be identified. First, when main objectives are identified: what communication patterns are supporting the different objectives? Assuming that different objectives lead to different communication patterns, knowledge of these patterns is needed. Second, what characterises the identified communicative patterns? More detailed knowledge is needed about the characteristics of the communication patterns to be able to compare and distinguish between them, and to be able to analyze and develop communication patterns to support different objectives. Finally, how are these communication patterns embedded in information technology? The link between objectives and information technology needs to be addressed. The technology itself must be investigated in relation to both communication patterns and main objectives.

4.3 How the problem areas are addressed in this thesis

The first problem, how to identify main objectives in E-democracy projects, arose from analyses based on a democracy model framework (Bellamy, 2000). The democracy model framework showed a promising potential to explain differences between different stakeholders. A democracy model describes a stereotypical form of democracy and outlines how it operates in practice. The democracy model framework shows potential for being a good candidate to explain and frame future research needed to identify different objectives in E-democracy projects.

For analytical purposes, comparison between Bellamy's different democracy models (Bellamy, 2000) was found to be difficult. Existing democracy models appear to be fragmented, lacking an integrative background for future study. Thus a detailed theoretical review of democracy model literature was done. Based on this review, an analysis of four E-democracy models is made and presented in the next chapter.

The second problem, how to link objectives to information technology, is closely related to the first problem. Main objectives for E-democracy projects can be identified from the suggested E-democracy models (introduced in the next chapter). When the main objectives are identified, information technology supporting these objectives should be identified. Knowledge from E-democracy models can then be connected to knowledge from the genre of the communication strands of research. The genre theory is one way of studying the emergence of new media or sub-media (Ihlström, 2004) and is introduced here to explore detailed viewpoints on communication patterns for E-democracy purposes. Finally, knowledge on information technology needs to be more explicit on the specific technology needed. Theories on IT-artefacts focus on the technology and its connection to tasks, structures and contexts. Knowledge of IT artefacts is connected to knowledge of genres and E-democracy models, and is used to explain the link between main objectives and information technology.

The integration of these theories is presented in chapter 6, together with a review of reported communication patterns for the different E-democracy models. These communication patterns are identified both to illustrate how the concept of the bridged theories can be used to analyse reported cases, and to build a basis for more cumulative knowledge on the link between objectives and technology in the field of E-democracy.

Finally, the theoretical contributions addressing both problem areas (presented in chapter 5 and 6) form the basis for a process suggested in chapter 7. The suggested process can guide practice on linking objectives and technology in E-democracy initiatives. An action case study, conducted in the initiation of a new project in a local Norwegian municipality, served as an empirical part of this thesis to explore this process.

5 Models of E-democracy

The models of E-democracy in the literature present different characteristics of the forms of democracy and show how different implementations and experiments of E-democracy have emerged. However, the existing literature appears fragmented, lacking an integrative approach on how to gather knowledge for the future. Thus, based on the existing literature, I develop four E-democracy models for analytical comparison. Existing theories on democracy models are summarised and related to my suggested E-democracy models in appendix 2. The models form a theoretical base for identifying overall objectives for E-democracy initiatives. The democracy models work as a theoretical lens addressing the first problem identified in this thesis: How to identify the main objectives in E-democracy projects.

A democracy model is based on a stereotypical form of democracy and can be explained in terms of real practice or as an ideal form. Different frameworks and categorizations of democracy models make use of different characteristics to outline the concepts. A detailed comparison of the competing models is difficult. Some models emerge from individual projects, while others have a more holistic approach. Different models are analysed and their characteristics are compared. Finally, some frameworks relate IT to various forms of political organisations and then models of E-democracy are suggested.

Because some cases were not accounted for in the current literature on democracy models, a new model called the Partisan model was developed and was used as a comparison to other models. Four E-democracy models are categorized based on two fundamental characteristics defined by Dahl (1989), in relation to any democratic process: inclusion in decisions and control of the agenda. Inclusion means that all adults who belong to a society should be allowed to participate in political debates and to be involved in decision-making processes. Control of the agenda deals with the issue of who decides what should be decided on. In particular, this would apply to citizens' rights to be allowed to raise issues and to actively participate in decision- making processes.

Citizens set the agenda	**Partisan E-democracy**	**Direct E-democracy**
Government (politicians and officers) set(s) the agenda	**Liberal E-democracy**	**Deliberative E-democracy**
	Citizens are implicitly included in decision-making processes	*Citizens have an explicitly defined role in decision-making processes*

Table 5. Models of E-democracy

5.1 Liberal E-democracy

Liberal E-democracy is characterised by government based agencies dealing with the agenda for decision-making processes and citizens implicitly participating in decision-making processes. Liberal democracy is based on a representative government, where citizens form the electorate, participate in public debate and give mandates to representatives at the local level (Held, 1996). This category includes several previously defined democracy models and

concepts (see appendix 2). The purpose of politics is to reconcile conflicting individual interests using politicians to mediate these conflicts through negotiations (Eriksen & Weigård, 1999). In Liberal E-democracy, the 'majority rule' protects the population from random government. Effective political leadership is underpinned by liberal principles such as minimum state intervention in civil society and peoples' private lives (Held, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000).

Liberal E-democracy forms an extensive part of the reported projects. The main emphasis varies among many issues: involvement (or lack of involvement) of young people in the development (of democracy) (Detlor & Finn, 2002; Finn & Detlor, 2002), characteristics of the participants (Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002; Weber, Loumakis, & Bergman, 2003), factors influencing use and adoption (Johnson & Kaye, 2003; Weare, Musso, & Hale, 1999), governmental services influencing power structures (La Porte, Demchak, & de Jong, 2002), characteristics of success stories (Jensen, 2003), and characteristics of design (Ward & Gibson, 2003). The objectives for such services vary. Citizens may be asked to submit suggestions to public authorities (Aidemark, 2003), dialogue may be initiated for the purpose of teaching inhabitants how to become e-citizens (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004), or citizens are given the opportunity to communicate with representatives and government officials (Nugent, 2001).

5.2 Deliberative E-democracy

The concept of Deliberative E-democracy connects citizens more explicitly and directly to decision-making processes (Held, 1996; Pateman, 1970) and emphasizes the role of open discussions in a well functioning public sphere (Gimmler, 2001). Politicians and citizens share ideas via dialogue and discourse which then leads to the formation of public political opinion. This is a form of representative democracy where the input and cooperation between citizens and politicians constitute the legalisation of power. In relation to Deliberative E-democracy, several ideas and concepts have been suggested. The concepts of Participative democracies (Held, 1996; Pateman, 1970; Van Dijk, 2000), Protective democracies, and Developmental democracies (Held, 1996) emphasise the advancement of equal rights and balance of power, which can only be accomplished in a participatory society. The importance of citizen participation and involvement are also emphasised in the concepts of Neo-Republican and Plebiscitary democracy (Bellamy, 2000; Van Dijk, 2000). Information technologies are developed with the purpose of increasing citizen participation and involvement in political decision-making beyond just casting votes in elections and participating in electoral campaigns (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Chadwick & May, 2003; Ferber, Foltz, & Pugliese, 2003; Hagemann, 2002; Musso, Weare, & Hale, 2000; Myles, 2004; Nugent, 2001; Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Ranerup, 2000; Steyaert, 2000).

Initial evidence from in-depth case studies indicates that true Deliberative E-democracy implementations with explicitly defined relationships to the actual decision-making processes may increase the level of citizen participation. Stanley & Weare (2004) show that an increased number of citizens and new citizen groups became involved when a governmental organization developed web-based E-docket services. Grönlund (2003) reports that more than one thousand inputs were made in a municipal system developed for the purpose of discussing the municipal development plan in Kalix, a small Swedish municipality. The "Ur'say" youth parliament in Scotland encouraged young people to participate in political discussions, in which the government representatives considered their input and subsequently provided explicit feedback on how this input affected their decisions (Macintosh, Robson, Smith, & Whyte, 2003).

5.3 Direct E-democracy

The Direct E-democracy model represents a radical alternative to representative models of democracy. In Direct E-democracy, network-based groups and individuals take over the role of traditional institutions (Bellamy, 2000; Held, 1996; Lynne, 2004). The idea of citizens participating directly in political decision-making processes originates from the classical Athenian ideas of democracy and participation in the polis-state, which focused on equal rights to rule and be ruled in turn by the free male citizens (Held, 1996). Direct democracy focuses on how traditional institutions lose power in favour of network-based groups or individuals (Bellamy, 2000; Held, 1996; Lynne, 2004). IT plays a critical role. The Internet no longer represents a supplement to traditional communication channels, but instead is a crucial pre-condition for democracy (Bellamy, 2000). A direct E-democracy initiative requires communication technology to support coordination between a great number of decision-makers (i.e., citizens) who are possibly geographically scattered and who come from diverse backgrounds.

5.4 Partisan E-democracy

Cases which are characterised as being independent to or in opposition to existing power structures are reported in current literature. No explicit connection to the existing government or political decision-making processes is defined. The impact is materialized mostly through general-level pressure of "public opinion" (Fung, 2002; Schneider, 1996) or through elections (Moon & Yang, 2003). None of the theoretical discussions on democracy models address such cases. Habermas's (1996) discussion on discursive deliberation touches on these issues, but this discussion is not considered to be a democracy model. Rather, it is an attempt to address important characteristics common to all democratic societies (Eriksen & Weigård, 1999). An actively communicative society focuses on legitimising public action by allowing discourse even when citizens have diverging viewpoints (Habermas, 1996). Existence of independent communication channels (not owned or directed by the government) is a prerequisite to achieving open and rational discourse (Habermas, 1996). Ideal democracies allow citizens an equal opportunity for placing questions on an agenda and for expressing ideas and concerns (Dahl, 1989). Hence, an important aspect of E-democracy is the concept of giving citizens communication and decision-making powers that are not controlled by the government.

Partisan E-democracy projects allow for citizen-initiated participation and implicit citizen involvement in the decision-making process. Active citizens can participate in the political debate not just by using traditional communication channels or by contacting their representatives. Information technology can offer alternative channels of communication that would foster openness for political expression and criticism without intervention from the political elite (Fung, 2002; Hurwitz, 1999; Moon & Yang, 2003; Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Paolillo & Heald, 2002; Papacharissi, 2004; Rodan, 1998; Schneider, 1996; Stromer-Galley, 2002; Tsaliki, 2002), unrestricted discussion can set an agenda: independent online communities discussing politics (Tsaliki, 2002), chat room discussions (Fung, 2002), Usenet discussions (Hill & Hughes, 1998; Schneider, 1996), and blogging (Griffiths, 2004; Macintosh, McKay-Hubbard, & Shell, 2005).

Partisan E-democracy considers citizens' rights to be heard and to meet as an audience as important issues (Moon & Yang, 2003; Paolillo & Heald, 2002; Stromer-Galley, 2002), even when the audience is scarce or absent (Hurwitz, 1999; Stromer-Galley, 2002; Tsaliki, 2002). New voices in the political arena (Fung, 2002; Stromer-Galley, 2002) and empowered citizens expressing alternative ideologies (Fung, 2002; Papacharissi, 2004) can fortify Partisan E-

democracy solutions even when the connection to the prevailing decision-making process remains implicit or is absent.

5.5 Summary

The four models of E-democracy integrate theoretical and empirical literature in the field and are summarised in table 6.

	Partisan E-democracy	**Direct E-democracy**
Citizens set the agenda	Citizens express bottom-up opinions and critique existing power structures. No explicit connection to the existing government or political decision-making processes is defined beforehand. Citizens set the agenda for public discussions, but not for decision-making. IT seeks to obtain visibility for alternative political expressions uninterrupted by political elite.	Citizens participate directly in decision-making processes. The citizens are online affecting the decisions to be made (mostly at the local level). Citizens set the agenda for both public discussion and decision-making. IT is a crucial pre-condition for democracy to support coordination among decision makers.
	Liberal E-democracy	**Deliberative E-democracy**
Government (politicians and officers) set(s) the agenda	Government serves citizens who participate in elections and related debates. Government would like to inform and be informed by the citizens. There is no clear connection to decision-making activities. IT seeks to improve the amount and quality of information exchange between government and citizens.	E-Democracy projects are used for specific purposes, involving citizens in public decision-making processes. Citizens have good reason to expect that their voices are heard concerning a particular matter. ICT is developed for increased citizen participation and involvement in decision-making processes.
	Citizens are implicitly included in decision-making processes	*Citizens have an explicitly defined role in decision-making processes*

Table 6. Models of E-democracy summarized

Liberal, Deliberative, and Partisan E-democracy theories are represented in the empirical academic literature. Due mainly to the theoretical emphasis on Direct E-democracy, examples of real-life applications are practically absent in the academic literature. On the other hand, the Partisan model of E-democracy was rarely discussed in the theoretical literature on E-democracy.

Based on the discussion above, I argue for a need for specific E-democracy models to be used in both practice and research. In order to decide on a particular medium or technology of E-democracy to be used, the actual democratic ideals and particular communication forms and purposes supporting those ideals need to be explicitly defined. For future empirical research on "the impact of Internet" or "enhancing citizen participation by E-democracy", the democracy ideals should be explicitly stated before drawing general-level conclusions about such issues.

The E-democracy models presented in this chapter allow a comparison between different potential purposes in E-democracy initiatives. The next question is how to relate these objectives to information technology for theoretical and practical purposes. In the next

chapter, knowledge on these four E-democracy models is used together with the knowledge of IT-artefacts and genres of communication to conceptualize a link between objectives and information technology. In chapter 7, the E-democracy models form a basis for a suggested process to guide practice in the initiation of new E-democracy projects.

6 Communication Genres for E-democracy

The second problem area addressed in this thesis (see chapter 4) is: how to link objectives of E.-Democracy to IT. To address this issue, I use knowledge of IT artefacts, genres of communication theories and E-democracy models. In this chapter, I present a theoretical approach to this issue by bridging knowledge from these three research fields. I then introduce communication genres for the different E-democracy models.

6.1 Linking objectives and IT artefacts

The IT artefact

The IT artefact - the core subject matter in the field of Information Systems (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001) - can be conceptualized in several ways. Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) define IT-artefacts as "Those bundles of material and cultural properties packaged in some socially recognizable form such as hardware and software" (p. 121). Features included in a definition of IT-artefacts depend on different facets of the IT-artefact (e.g., proxy, tool, ensemble, computational or nominal). Benbasat and Zmud (2003) define IT-artefacts as: "the application to enable or support some task(s) embedded within a structure(s) that itself is embedded within a context(s)" (p. 186). Benbasat and Zmud's view is illustrated in figure 7.
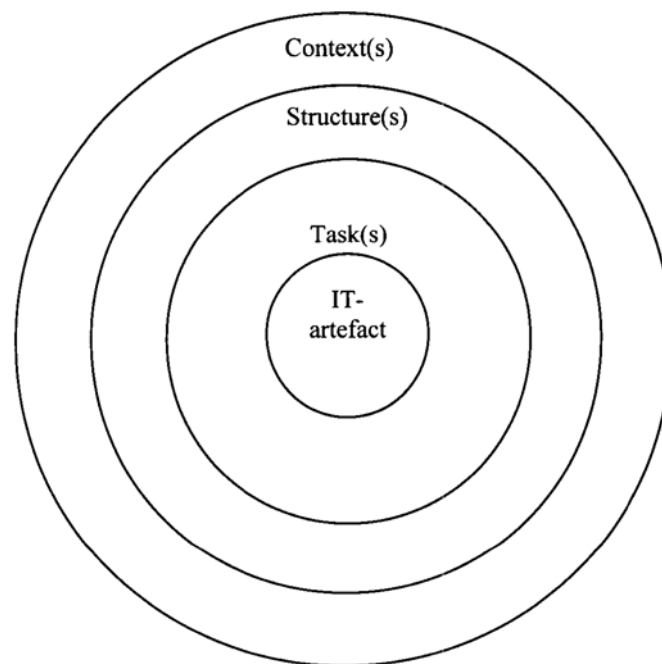
Figure 7. The IT artefact (Benbasat & Zmud, 2003)

In the ensemble view of IT artefact, the technology is shown to be "only one element in a "package," which also includes the components required to apply that technical artefact to some socio-economic activity" (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001, p. 125). This subsumes not only the inner circle but all the elements in figure 7, including structure(s) and context(s). Orlikowski and Iacono argue that technology needs to be emphasized in relation to other elements. They propose five premises for IT artefacts:
- IT artefacts are always implicated in action and effect.
- IT artefacts are always embedded in some time, discourse and community.

- IT artefacts are usually made up of a multiplicity of often fragile and fragmentary components.
- IT artefacts emerge from ongoing social and economic practices.
- IT artefacts are dynamic, not static or unchanging.

There is a need to focus on "technologies with distinctive cultural and computational capabilities, existing in various social, historical, and institutional contexts" (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001, p. 131) in order to address the premises of IT artefacts.

Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) and Benbasat and Zmud (2003) call for increased focus on IT artefact, yet neither has specified how to do so in specific research areas. To address the IT artefact in the E-democracy area I draw upon the communication genre perspective.

The genre of communication perspective

The genre perspective is one way of studying the emergence of new media or sub-media (Ihlström, 2004). The term genre originally describes a distinctive type or category of literary composition (Ihlström, 2004). The genre perspective was introduced to IS research by Yates and Orlikowski (1994; , 1992) who investigated organizational communication based on it. By employing various computing devices and the internet, the genre research agenda has broadened not only to organizational, but also digital genres (Ihlström, 2004). In regard to this thesis, the term genre is used to describe digital genres which are partially or fully dependent on computational devices.

The genre perspective employs communication, while also exploring the rationale or reason for enacting the communication (Ihlström, 2004). In general, genre of communication is characterized by socially recognised *substance* and common characteristics of *form(s)* identified by a community (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). *Substance* refers to social motives, such as purpose of communication (Honkaranta, 2003). *Form* of a genre refers to physical and linguistic features like layout, language and media (Honkaranta, 2003; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992).

The form of the genre perspective addresses the inner core in figure 7 (illustrating the IT-artefact). The substance element of the genre reflects Orlikowski and Iacono's (2001) ensemble view of IT-artefacts, where the technology is seen to be embedded in the tasks and structure. Thus, the genre perspective combines form and substance (the task and structure part of the IT artefact). IT-artefacts are also embedded in the context of the communication. The E-democracy models (presented in previous chapter) characterise different democracy forms and identify overall objectives. E-democracy projects, including the contextual settings and the overall objectives, can be framed using the E-democracy models. Genre analysis, combined with the E-democracy models, provides a conceptual tool to explain the characteristics of the IT artefact itself and the context(s), structure(s) and task(s) of its use. Figure 8 illustrates how the genre perspective and the models of E-democracy make up the ensemble view of IT-artefacts in the E-democracy field.
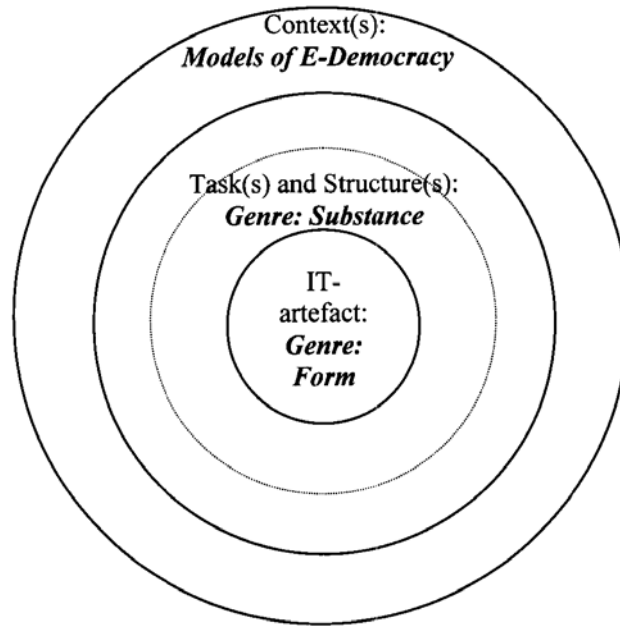
Figure 8. Ensemble view of IT-artefacts encompassing E-democracy

To illustrate the explanatory potential of combining IT-artefacts, genres of communication and E-democracy models, genres were identified from projects and initiatives reported in the E-democracy studies. The identified genres were sorted according to the E-democracy model they best related to and were then analyzed by form and substance. A summary of the review is presented here; a more detailed review is found in paper 3.

6.2 Genres for Liberal E-democracy

Most Liberal E-democracy projects focus on developing improved information exchange between major stakeholders. Major objectives of the Liberal E-democracy genre are to inform citizens, to obtain input from citizens and to strengthen the relationship between politicians and citizens. Citizens' influence in the decision-making process is not explicitly defined.

One example of a Liberal E-democracy genre is a dialogue system where citizens are asked to submit suggestions to authorities (Aidemark, 2003). These dialogues are initiated in order to begin to teach inhabitants to become e-citizens (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004). This also gives citizens the opportunity to communicate with representatives and government officials (Nugent, 2001). Another example is a consultation system which focuses on increasing the speed and accuracy of information exchange between government and citizens (OECD, 2001). As these examples illustrate, consultation and dialogue systems help with the design and implementation of the Liberal E-democracy perspective. Thus, Liberal E-democracy projects do not challenge the traditional power structure as such, but allow citizens to have implicit influence on the ongoing decision-making process. Table 7 presents genres for Liberal E-democracy identified in the literature.

Form	Substance
Discussion forums	Increasing interactive communication between citizens and politicians for information exchange, not decision-making purposes
Dialogue system	Citizens express suggestions and ideas as input to decisions made by politicians
Information broadcasting	To bring information from elite to citizens (top-down)
Governmental homepages	To inform citizens about timely issues.
E-Debates between candidates	Broadcast debates between politicians to inform the electors
Information portals	One stop access point for citizens to obtain information
Consultation	Government/ politicians are able to respond to citizen's questions.
Candidate/ campaigning websites	Promote a candidate or a case

Table 7. Genres for Liberal E-democracy

6.3 Genres for Deliberative E-democracy

In Deliberative E-democracy, information technology is expected to increase citizen's participation and interaction with political decision-makers beyond merely voting in elections or actively campaigning during elections (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Chadwick & May, 2003; Ferber, Foltz, & Pugliese, 2003; Hagemann, 2002; Musso, Weare, & Hale, 2000; Myles, 2004; Nugent, 2001; Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Ranerup, 2000; Steyaert, 2000).

The earliest e-mail correspondence systems – LIN (legislative information network) in Alaska and PEN (public electronic network) in Santa Monica, California – were already involving citizens in state-level legislation and municipal decision-making in the 1980s (Groper, 1996). After the diffusion of the www- system, several Deliberative E-democracy initiatives emerged, mostly at the municipal level (Aidemark, 2003; Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Carvalho, Rocha, & Oliveira, 2003; Grönlund, 2003). Examples of other Deliberative E-democracy genres have been reported in Norway (Heidar & Saglie, 2003), in the US (Stanley & Weare, 2004), and in Scotland (in the Scottish youth parliament) (Macintosh, Robson, Smith, & Whyte, 2003; Masters, Macintosh, & Smith, 2004). Table 8 presents genres for Deliberative E-democracy.

Form	Substance
Discussion forum (issue-based), E-docket	Initiating, drafting and defining political issues, following up decisions.
Dialogue system	Citizens express suggestions and opinions about issues.
Invitation to submit suggestions	To inform citizens that they can submit suggestions to municipality.
(e-) Referendum	To inform decision-makers about citizens' view on a particular issue. Often "for information".
Homepages	To inform citizens about timely issues and to educate them on possibilities for deliberative democracy.
On-line transmissions of meetings	To make decision-processes transparent, to follow-up decisions made by representatives.
Citizen panel / "jury"	Getting information from a sample of citizens concerning a specific issue.
On-line questionnaire / Survey	Getting opinions from citizens on a particular issue.
E-voting / Membership ballot	Getting opinions from citizens / members of a community on particular issues.
"Your question"	Citizens can ask questions of politicians.
Public opinion messages	Citizens express their opinions on legislation or local politics, follow-up on whether public opinion has been followed.
Real-time chat, Group-to-group chat	Citizens can contact politicians on-line to discuss issues.
Closed discussion forum	Party members can affect opinion within a party. Young citizens can affect the "voice of youth".
Expert panel	Choosing appropriate background documentation for a targeted debate.
Formal consultation report	Collecting viewpoints for targeted debate to give to decision-makers.
Feedback about targeted discussions	Informing discussants and representatives on how the discussion affects the decisions.

Table 8. Genres for Deliberative E-democracy

6.4 Genres for Direct E-democracy

Direct democracy has been suggested as the ideal for E-democracy in many theoretical sources (see Chapter 5). Still, despite optimistic theorizing, the actual implementation of Direct E-democracy is rare (Aidemark, 2003; Heidar & Saglie, 2003; Myles, 2004; Netchaeva, 2002). For example, some municipalities have failed to establish explicit mechanisms for fostering citizen participation in the decision-making process in their E-democracy projects (Myles, 2004). In Sweden, however, examples of Direct E-democracy have begun to emerge in the form of new www- (or net-) parties, which are used at the local/municipal level of politics (Aidemark, 2003; Sæbø & Päivärinta, 2005). This development seems to have emerged as a result of new political parties formed by individuals who are using new communication media. In contrast, traditional party organizations have not embraced the new media as evidenced in Norway (Heidar & Saglie, 2003) and Denmark (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003).

Two Swedish Internet-based parties, Demoex (www.demoex.net) and Knivsta.nu (www.Knivsta.nu), have used the ideal of Direct E-democracy in their internal decision-making processes. These parties have elected representatives to exert political power on local municipal boards (in Vallentuna and Knivsta) and have installed www-based communication tools that are used as part of the decision-making process undertaken by the party and its representatives. Table 9 presents genres for Direct E-democracy.

Form	Substance
User Registration	To allow citizens to join the Internet party and have the right to act in the community
Open discussion/ idea forum	To allow citizens to raise new issues and discuss them
Decision-making on issues to be debated	To allow citizens to decide which issues should be debated or voted on further, so that the representatives can raise these issues to the municipal board
Targeted debate forums (before particular decisions)	To allow citizens to raise issues for formal discussion.
Background documentation of issues	To inform the users about timely issues and the decisions taken.
E-Voting	To inform the party representatives on how to act in the municipal council

Table 9. Genres for Direct E-democracy

6.5 Genres for Partisan E-democracy

In Partisan E-democracy, information technology is used to allow alternative political expression and critique without intervention from the political elite. Partisan E-democracy focuses on the potential facilitation of the public sphere on the Internet (Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Paolillo & Heald, 2002), citizen's influence on the decision-making processes (Hurwitz, 1999; Moon & Yang, 2003; Paolillo & Heald, 2002), characteristics of the users (and non-users) of online services (Fung, 2002; Stromer-Galley, 2002; Tsaliki, 2002), characteristics of the language and arguments used (Papacharissi, 2004), different perspectives on control and censuring (Fung, 2002; Rodan, 1998) and equality towards participation in online debates (Schneider, 1996) .

Moon and Yang (2003) and Papacharissi (2004) emphasize the importance of allowing citizens to voice alternative opinions to those of political regimes, to communicate across geographic borders and to propose new avenues for political change. Reduced costs and speed of communication are two examples of support needed to enable citizens and interest groups to communicate more efficiently (Moon & Yang, 2003). Stromer-Galley (2002) investigated differences between online and offline users who participated in discussions concerning democratic issues. He discovered that people were more apt to voice alternative ideas and were open to meeting new audiences in a forum where anonymity was allowed. Table 10 presents genres for Partisan E-democracy.

Form	Substance
Discussion forum	To provide a channel for expressing disparate opinions from the prevailing political system (anonymity ensured)
Chat system	To provide a synchronous system for short and fast messages.(not for long, contemplative messages)
Information Portals	To provide information on a particular case with a particular view and to provide neutral information
Newsgroups/Usenet groups	To provide a synchronous system for longer discussions
Mail-based discussions	To provide a synchronous system to discuss differing viewpoints; to introduce a push-technology by sending mail to participants.
Web Blogs	To provide a space for people to broadcast their views

Table 10. Genres for Partisan E-democracy

6.6 Summary

In this chapter, I address the second problem area identified in this thesis -how to link objectives to technology. I do this by bridging the knowledge of IT-artefacts, genres of communication theories and models of E-democracy. Genres of communication are identified in relation to the different E-democracy models and are then characterised according to their form and substance. An ensemble view of IT artefacts is discussed by combining the genre perspective (addressing task and structure) and the E-democracy models (addressing context).

Each democracy model generally assumes that citizens should participate in democratic communication. But the purpose of such communication varies among different democracy models according to their specific ideas on the extent of citizen participation or the relationship of citizens and other stakeholders. All E-democracy models involve IT, and the form may be the same regardless of the E-democracy model. For example, discussion forums were identified as a potential communication tool in every model. However, the substance (the purpose of the communication) genre differs even if the models are based on the same form, as illustrated in paper 2.

Communication genres for Liberal E-democracy focus on general-level topics connected to elections, while genres for Deliberative and Direct E-democracy models deal with more issue-based communication. Partisan E-democracy models include both issue-based and general-level political communication. Direct E-democracy experiments function in the context of representative democracy systems. The identified internet parties still select representatives but this occurs mainly through traditional elections.

Two main contributions to this thesis are discussed in this chapter. First, a theoretical contribution is made by combining knowledge on technology, communication genres and E-democracy models. Second, genres for the E-democracy models are identified from the E-democracy literature. This provides a basis for more cumulative research efforts and structured practice, and integrates knowledge of previous research to guide democracy ideals and genres in a new, systematic manner.

The theoretical contributions on E-democracy models, presented in the previous chapter, and the genres of E-democracy presented here, should guide practitioners by identifying alternatives and opportunities present in the development of an E-democracy project. Thus, these contributions form the basis of the suggested process for identifying purposes and genres in E-democracy projects presented in the next chapter.

7 A process for identifying objectives and genres in E-democracy initiatives

The process described in this chapter is based on the two theoretical premises introduced in the two previous chapters. E-democracy models characterise different democracy forms and identify overall objectives. IT-artefacts, genre perspectives and E-democracy models are introduced in chapter 6. By bridging the knowledge from these areas, genres for E-democracy models are identified and presented in tables 7-10 in the previous chapter.

In the introductory part of this thesis, I expressed interest in guiding research and practice based on these theoretical contributions. As an initial attempt to guide practice, I suggest the process presented here. Through an action case study experiences were gained on the practical uses of the suggested process from the initiation of a new E-democracy project in the Kristiansand municipality. More details on the process can be found in paper 5. More background and details on experiences from the action case study can be found in paper 6.

7.1 Introducing the suggested process

The suggested process has two phases. First, objectives for the projects should be identified. Second, genres supporting these objectives should be discussed. The process responds to the much criticised approach of concentrating on technology first before focusing on strategies and purposes (Grönlund, 2003; Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Ranerup, 2000; Tops, Horrocks, & Hoff, 2000).

Phase 1: Identifying objectives for the project

The first phase concentrates on identifying objectives for the forthcoming projects. Three main activities are suggested. First, the project initiators should be responsible for identifying major stakeholders for the project. Involving major stakeholders throughout the whole process can improve the project (Flak & Rose, 2005). Second, analyses should be conducted by the stakeholders on the main objectives for the forthcoming E-democracy project. Reflections on different E-democracy models allow for positioning different stakeholders' views on these objectives. Third, divergent ideas should be discussed by major stakeholders in order to reach an agreement on the focus of the project and to reach a consensus between major stakeholders. Table 11 presents the major steps for phase one of this process.

Steps	Participants	Outcome	Suggested tools	Relation to theory
Identifying major stakeholders	Project initiators	A list of major stakeholders included in the process.	Interviews Mapping techniques Workshops	*A precondition, no direct connection to the theories involved.*
Analysing objectives and purposes	Stakeholders	Stakeholders' objectives are identified.	Interviews Workshops Surveys	Individuals' objectives are identified according to the four democracy models (Table 6, Chapter 4)
Consensus-building on main objectives	Stakeholders	Common understanding of objectives of the project.	Workshops Scenario building Interviews	Objectives are agreed on supporting one (or several) of the democracy models (Table 6, Chapter 4)

Table 11. Suggested steps in identifying objectives of the process

Phase 2: Linking the identified objectives to E-democracy genres

The second phase concentrates on how to connect E-democracy genres to the identified objectives. Phase 1 should result in an overview of which E-democracy model(s) would be used to support the project. The identified E-democracy genres in Tables 7-10 could act as a starting point for a discussion of possible E-democracy genres. By presenting these E-democracy genres, stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on the expected usefulness of the different alternatives. Project owners could be in charge of making decisions on potential scenarios and characteristics that should be supported in the development process. Table 12 presents suggestions for enacting this phase of the process.

Steps	Participants	Outcome	Suggested tools	Relation to theory
Identifying possible E-democracy genres	Stakeholders	An overview of different opportunities and reflection on the usefulness of different alternatives.	Prototyping Pilot testing Work shops Interviews	Technological processes are identified according to the E-democracy genres (Table 7-10, Chapter 5) and democracy model (s)
Developing a prioritized list of objectives and possible genres	Project owners	Prioritized list objectives and potential technological forms to guide the forthcoming development process.	Work shops Interviews	An overview presents the E-democracy models to support the suggested E-democracy genres (Table 7-10, Chapter 5)

Table 12. Suggested steps for identifying the genre phase of the process

7.2 Exploring the suggested process

This suggested process was used in the initiation of a new E-democracy project. The method for the initiation of the project is presented in chapter 2. The action case is described in table 1. Table 13 presents the first two phases of the action case study.

Phase 1: Identifying objectives for the project					
Steps	**Participants**	**Outcome**	**Tools**	**Relation to theory**	**Comments**
Identifying major stakeholders	Stakeholders appointed by the executive officer.	Twelve stakeholders appointed - six politicians and six staff personnel.	E-mail correspondence Dialogue by the executive officer	*Precondition, no direct connection to the theories involved.*	Two staff personnel could not participate in the project.
Analysing objectives	10 stakeholders	Stakeholders' objectives were identified.	Dialogues	Support from Liberal and Deliberative democracy models were identified	
Consensus-building on objectives		*(Not conducted in the action case)*	*No activity took place*	*No activity took place*	*No plenary activities took place, so the consensus building was mainly ignored.*
Phase 2: Linking the identified objectives to E-democracy genres					
Identifying possible E-democracy genres	10 Stakeholders	Individuals discussed use and usefulness of different technologies.	Dialogues	Genres supporting Liberal and Deliberative democracy models were identified.	Opportunities were discussed by each individual.
Developing a prioritized list of objectives and possible genres	Researcher	Temporary list of opportunities are developed (table 18)	Researcher's analysis	Main objectives and suggested genres were presented (see Table 6).	The task was conducted by the researcher.

Table 13. Phases conducted in the action case study

Analysis of phase 1: Identifying objectives for the project

In the first step, the executive officer appointed stakeholders, based on their role in the project, their previous experiences on E-democracy projects and their availability for participation in the research project. In the second step, objectives were developed using the four different E-democracy models presented in chapter 5. Through discussion of the E-democracy models, participants began to reflect on the purpose of the project, and on the advantages and disadvantages of the different models.

The Liberal E-democracy model achieved major support. The main focus of this model is to disseminate information without influencing the decision-making process. The model allows for the opportunity to give input within the traditional representative democratic process. One participant commented (more quotes are included in paper 6):

> *Citizen's main contribution is to add good advices…. If there are many contributions concerning a subject it's a sign on the importance of that subject, it's like taking the heat on citizen's concerns.*

The Deliberative E-democracy model was also considered as a model to support by the project. However, there was a major concern with this model. The model is used as a way to

engage citizens in meaningful discourse, but if politicians are not willing to be influenced by citizens' suggestions, then the model would not be a viable model for the project. Although, in general, citizens do want to have the opportunity to speak and want to feel they have a real influence on decisions that are made. A quote from one of the participants illustrates this point:

> *I believe politicians would like to stay in the Liberal quadrant, being able to claim a comprehensive communication with the target group, but still make all the decisions themselves. That would not be very popular. To succeed I think we need to get to the two models here* (Direct and Deliberative E-democracy). *People don't want to engage without any influence. Then we fool them.*

Participants voiced minor support for the Partisan E-democracy model. Supporting this model was not relevant at the municipal level, was seen as irrelevant in this context, but it was agreed that the model should be developed and maintained in other venues outside the municipality, for example with media groups or other stakeholder groups. The participants also worried about interruptions in free political discussion. One participant noted:

> *Those who would like to go into action have to do it themselves. And everyone is able to develop a webpage if needed.*

In addition, the Direct E-democracy model achieved minor support. Lack of tradition for referendums and high costs were seen as obstacles for developing the Direct E-democracy model. Clear alternative answers, which are needed in referendums, are seen to be absent in a modern democracy. The Internet could serve to defray the costs needed to perform referendums, but the real challenge would be to garner citizen involvement. Most participants felt the Direct E-democracy model would not respond sufficiently to the complexity needed:

> *In direct democracy single subjects will obtain too much space. You'll lose the comprehensive overview needed in a democracy.*

The third step, which dealt with consensus building of objectives and purposes, was not conducted in the action case study. Restricted resources did not allow consensus-building activities to be part of the first stage of development, as suggested in the process in table 11. Thus the second stage of the project considered individual views on how to enact genres for different E-democracy models.

Analysis of phase 2: Linking the identified objectives to E-democracy Genres

The analysis above identified support for two models: the Liberal E-democracy model and the Deliberative E-democracy model. Genres for Liberal E-democracy focus on information exchange where the Internet allows for a simplified presentation of information. Some of the participants saw the government-centric presentation of information to be a major obstacle for fostering citizen's participation. The Internet's opportunity to host citizen-centric information channels is therefore seen as an important counterbalance to this. Other important issues highlighted were: how to design a webpage, how to increase the efficiency of information distribution by e-mail or by blog, and how to offer communication channels that are known to the users (e.g., radio, television). In discussing genres for Liberal E-democracy, participants commented:

> *Personally I would like to have a blog where I write some thoughts on what I as a politician are doing right now. That would have been great.*

> *We have discussed the opportunity to broadcast meetings with the opportunity to get instant feedback from citizens by having a computer on the table. I think it will be too demanding for the elected since you have to be very concentrated to participate in a debate. It will become too intense.*

> *What is important in a Liberal democracy is the municipalities' home page. Personally I utilise the web to find old subjects and minutes which I find very convenient.*

The focus on how to enact Deliberative E-democracy models was more on discussion rather than on information exchange. Participants also commented on the importance of setting up simultaneous communication patterns so that real discussions in real time would be supported. Some participant's comments on Deliberative democracy models were:

E-based debates between candidates are interesting, so far mostly utilised internally in the party. But they are utilised more and more by committees in the municipality.

I find Chat most convenient for deliberative democracy because you are then able to really discuss.

The analysis summarised in table 14 is based on participants' support for the Liberal and the Deliberative E-democracy model, presented in more detail in Paper 6.

Partisan E-democracy	Direct E-democracy
Limited support from participants. The model is not considered to be relevant at the municipal level.	Achieved only limited support. Challenges were: representational issues, costs and complexity of decision making processes.
Liberal E-democracy	**Deliberative E-democracy**
Gained support from participants. Unproblematic link between projects and the traditional democratic system. Quality of information exchange is seen as important. Technological forms are assessed by: ease of access, feedback on questions made and opportunities for information broadcasting. Avenues to explore further in the project are: • Radio/TV transmission • Question and answer services • Information portals • News mail • Blogs • Space on the municipality's home-page	Gained support from participants. Challenging, but also more interesting for citizens than the Liberal model. Opportunity to discuss and influence are seen as important. Technological forms are assessed by: opportunity to discuss, feedback on the influence made by contributions and opportunity to participate in synchronous discussions. Avenues to explore further in the project are: • Discussion forums • E-mail based discussions • E-Debates between candidates and citizens • Chat

Table 14. Summarised analysis of the action case project

Participants' reflection on the usefulness of the suggested process

The suggested process was perceived as useful by the participants in the project. This was underscored by the fact that all participants were able to reflect immediately on different E-democracy models and genres despite only a limited introduction. Participants found the idea of starting with the main purpose before discussing technology to be helpful. The suggested process was found by some to be too complicated, but still helpful. Participants addressed the need to be more concrete on what technology would be used and what the costs would be for sustaining a given model. Some comments were:

I think it is necessary to look at what is needed to succeed. A presentation like this makes it possible to reflect on what is needed instead of just being positive to participate only since it (the Internet) is a new way to communicate, and therefore worthy by itself.

It is really helpful to point out which direction this leads us, making visible the alternatives

It (the suggested process) is quite solid.… It has to be simplified for practical usefulness.

The problem is often that we start up with technical solutions before knowing what we would like to achieve, which I found to be meaningless. You need to look at what to achieve, different alternatives and thereafter

choosing the technical solution. Politicians need to get different opportunities plainly put, including cost accounting and what's expected from them on different alternatives.

Immediately it seems interesting to arrange a session for the city council where politicians themselves, based on this process, discuss what they like to develop. Simply a process of increasing awareness on what they like to achieve.

There's a need for even more concretising of different alternatives. What are you achieving by a discussion forum, by a chat system? I don't know.

7.3 Summary

Due to a limited amount of empirical evidence, definite conclusions on the use and usefulness of the suggested process should not be drawn. Instead, the suggested process should be seen as an initial attempt to guide practice. Despite this, the case does provide guidance on how to translate the theoretical contributions in this thesis to practical use.

The suggested process responds to the call for more knowledge on the connection between technology and democracy (Bellamy & Taylor, 1998; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000; Løfgren, 2000) by addressing two identified challenges: identifying major objectives and enact technological forms. In the Democracy Square project the conceptions were taken for granted. Now, by introducing the process, basic ideas for what to achieve was discussed. Supported by evidences on the usefulness of the process, I claim that the suggested process arranges for a discussion on objectives and purposes in this action case study.

The process translates the theoretical contributions presented in Chapter 5 (the E-democracy models) and Chapter 6 (The E-democracy genre perspective) into practical use. Main objectives are addressed by introducing the E-democracy models. The dialogues illustrate the differences between the Liberal and the Deliberative models. Some participants noted the difference between the "realistic and unproblematic" Liberal model, and the "wanted, but much more challenging" Deliberative model.

The link between technological forms and overall objectives is addressed by introducing the genres of E-democracy. The action case study revealed two challenges in the second phase of the process. First, the presentation was found to be complicated. This is not surprising given the fact that the technological forms were only briefly introduced to the participants without any real examples or prototypes. The introduction was based only on the theoretical presentation, and the participants were asked to reflect on it immediately. The process may have been easier to grasp if prototypes had been used, if examples from existing projects had been presented or if scenarios illustrating consequences had been outlined.

Second, the identified E-democracy genres did not cover all alternative technological forms discussed by the participants, for example, radio or TV-transmission. The E-democracy genre lists (Tables 7-10) are essentially based on experiences reported in academic publications. Genres for E-democracy are evolving dynamically as new technology is being developed and used in daily life. Hence, the initial list did not include the full range of possibilities, but did serve as a starting point for discussing alternatives. This shortcoming could act as a catalyst to promote a discussion on new evolving technological forms not currently accounted for by the E-democracy genre list.

The dialogues explored some strengths of the proposed process. First, the E-democracy models allowed a simplified comparison between different alternatives. A discussion was initiated on the objectives of the project before focus was directed on the technology. This

was found to be a weakness in other E-democracy projects (Grönlund, 2003; Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002). The immediate opportunity to link main ideas (phase 1) and communication genres (phase 2) showed importance in the discussion on what to develop. The objectives became clearer before approaching a discussion on technology. The participants were immediately empowered to discuss alternatives and express their viewpoints on what to achieve in the forthcoming project.

Some challenges were also identified. Suggestions for improving the process included: estimating expected resources needed for different alternatives, assessing realistic time requirements and ensuring an adequate technological competence for participants. Such information is difficult to identify today because of restricted experience in utilising different communication genres in E-democracy projects.

The suggested process includes both the empirical work and the theoretical work conducted in this thesis. The action case study was constructed on the basis of earlier phases of the longitudinal case study conducted (phases 1-3, figure 4), and the theoretical contributions presented in this thesis. In the next chapter, I summarise, draw conclusions, and reflect upon this thesis work.

8 Conclusion

This thesis explores the initiation of discussion forums for E-democracy. A longitudinal case study was conducted, focusing mainly on two E-democracy projects. First, a project named Democracy Square was developed by three public authorities in the southern part of Norway, whose principle interest was to establish a discussion forum. Second, a new E-democracy project was initiated by one of the participants from the Democracy Square project.

Perspectives from three strands of theories were combined to clarify a situation with unclear and unshared ideas, and then these concepts were used to link objectives to technological forms in E-democracy initiatives. The perspectives used were: the democracy models, IT artefacts and the Genres of communication. This thesis identifies the challenges faced in an E-democracy project, increases the theoretical understanding of E-democracy models and the links between technology, genres and E-democracy models, and suggests a process for guiding practical application. Two problems were identified from the Democracy Square project and the E-democracy literature.

How to identify major objectives in E-democracy initiatives
To address the first problem, I developed four models of E-democracy based on theoretical and empirical contributions from the E-democracy field. Comprising stereotypical forms of democracy, the models form a theoretical base for investigating and comparing overall objectives for E-democracy projects. Categorized by inclusion in the decision-making process and control of the agenda, the models presented were: Partisan E-democracy, Liberal E-democracy, Deliberative E-democracy and Direct E-democracy.

How to link identified objectives to information technology
The second problem was addressed by bridging theories on the IT artefact, the genre perspective and E-democracy models. IT artefacts are characterised by technology embedded in tasks and structures. These elements can be addressed by looking at the genre perspectives on form (addressing technology in itself) and substance (addressing tasks and structures). IT-artefacts are also embedded in contexts that can be identified from the presented E-democracy models.

To guide practice, I introduced a process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-democracy projects. The process consisted of two phases: addressing main objectives from the E-democracy models and implementing technological forms by the identified E-democracy genres. Based on an action case approach, the suggested process was explored in the initiation of a new E-democracy project, illustrating the process' potential to guide practice in the initiation of E-democracy projects.

8.1 Contributions to knowledge

Based on the discussions in chapter 2, where this thesis work is related to Vidgen and Braa's (1997) framework for IS research, I argue that contributions are made for understanding and change, as well as theoretical development in the E-democracy area.

Contributions to increased understanding

This thesis contributes to an **increased understanding of major challenges in an E-democracy discussion forum.** In the Democracy Square project, I focused on interpretative knowledge to understand the nature of discourse in the discussion forum. Studying postings

made to the political on-line forum offered insight into the purposes and interests of citizens and politicians and in which communication forms these are expressed. The analysis showed that politicians set out to demonstrate their specialist/elite expertise through rational argumentation with a desire to broadcast their policies to a broad range of voters. Citizens engaged politicians in discourse in order to set agendas and influence political decision-making. This basic conflict of viewpoints and interests was underlined by the analysis of the communication forms through qualitative content analysis. This revealed repeated communication patterns, showing the different interests of citizens and politicians.

Contributions to theory

This thesis contributes to theoretical understanding by **identifying potential objectives for E-democracy initiatives from E-democracy models.** Theories of democracy have been presented, and several suggested implementations and experiments for E-democracy have been outlined. However, the existing literature appears fragmented, lacking an integrative quality on how to gather knowledge for future study. Subsequent to an analysis of theories of E-democracy versus implementations reported in related literature, the need for a model for contemporary theoretical literature was identified. Thus, I introduce the Partisan model of E-democracy.

This thesis also **bridges theories on IT artefacts, genres and E-democracy models.** I argue that research in the E-democracy field of technology and the IT- artefact can be based on the genre perspective and E-democracy models. By an ensemble view of the IT artefact, technology is seen as only one element in a socio-economic activity, embedded by tasks, structures and contexts. The genre perspective combined with E-democracy models can help us understand the link between technology and its surroundings and in this way underscores the ensemble view of the IT artefact in the E-democracy field.

Based on these theories, genres of E-democracy were identified. These genres **provide a cumulative basis for research efforts to understand IT use for E-democracy**. Several reports from E-democracy initiatives and projects on how to utilise IT do exist. However, they often do not share a common theoretical foundation and do not have cumulative knowledge that could bring research and practice forward. I respond to the call for more theory building in the field (Andersen & Henriksen, 2005; Grönlund, 2003) by introducing a framework for genre analysis under four stereotypical models of E-democracy. I suggest that the E-democracy genre provides a basis for more cumulative research efforts and structured practice. They could also be used to further analyse previous research on democracy ideals and genres more systematically.

Contributions to change

Based on the theoretical contributions mentioned above, I suggest a process for identifying objectives and genres in E-democracy project. This process was introduced in the initiation of new E-democracy project and was explored in an action case. I argue that the suggested process increased our understanding of **how to develop and manage E-democracy projects**. It also contributed to our knowledge on how to translate the theoretical contributions (developed in this thesis) into practical processes. These processes are based on the E-democracy models and genres and they provide guidance for practical purposes by identifying potential objectives and genres to be implemented in the initiation of the E-democracy project.

8.2 Reflection on the research

The research in this thesis is briefly evaluated according to the criteria for interpretative research (Klein & Myers, 1999). Here I will give an account of some limitations of the research and make some theoretical and empirical reflections.

Limitations of the research

Validity concerns are discussed in section 2.3. There are, however, limitations to the findings in both the longitudinal case study and the literature reviews. A major limitation of the empirical research is the limited amount of fieldwork done which used these developed theories and suggested processes. One small action case project does not provide evidence to support the claim that the process is generalisable to other situations. The process is therefore to be seen only as an initial attempt to guide practice. Despite of this I argue that even though more research is needed to develop guidance for practice and research, a major contribution is made by identifying and developing E-democracy models and genres.

One theoretical concern involves the quality of the reports upon which the theories are developed. Research on E-democracy contains a scattered field of experiments lacking solid theoretical foundations. The number of reports published in quality journals is limited. Therefore, the academic rigor was less emphasized in the selection of literature sources (e.g., conference proceedings were included to increase the number of reports).

Reflections on theoretical contributions

The four E-democracy models developed in this thesis were designed to be easily understood and to be easily explained to both practitioners and researchers in the field. However, there are always challenges and weaknesses in developing such a simplified matrix. The theoretical representation can give the impression that strong and natural lines of demarcation exist between these models but this is not necessarily the case. Empirical findings from the action case study, reported in Paper 6, illustrate how the classification between the Liberal and Deliberative models was not clear for all participants. This underscores the importance of seeing these models as a simplified representation of different alternatives and not as an absolute representation of "truth". Representing conceptualizations in such simplified models is important for communicating findings, but by the same token, they should be judged as what they are: my reconstruction of other people's constructions of different models.

To what extent should a society embody several or all four of these E-democracy models? A parallel existence of all the models may be necessary to ensure a dynamic balance between a democratic development process and the practical governance of public matters. For example, without operational decision-making by politicians and officers (as in Liberal E-democracy), the governance could appear inefficient. No quick decisions could be made without discussing each matter with a large number of stakeholders. Deliberative E-democracy could make the representatives more accountable for their decisions between election periods. Without any means for Partisan E-democracy, new or minority viewpoints might remain unexpressed. In this thesis, I have addressed the purposes and objectives for each E-democracy model. However, further research is needed to investigate how the four models can be seen in relation to each other in order to analyse and develop genre repertoires which are needed in a society employing one or several of these E-democracy models.

I have argued that the genres for E-democracy add a cumulative basis for further research and practice. The genre perspective also explains how similar technology supports different E-

democracy models. The difference is not in the technology itself, but is in the tasks, structures and contexts in which the technology is embedded.

Genres were identified mainly from reported research in the field, and the genre lists in tables 7-10 are by nature not complete or static. As new technology appears and new communication genres are introduced and become familiar to the citizens, administrators and politicians, new E-democracy genres will evolve. The genre lists should therefore be seen as starting points for a discussion of different alternatives. I argue that a theoretical approach bridging knowledge from three different strands of research is more important than the specific genres identified for each model, since the theoretical approach can guide the identification of genres in current and future E-democracy projects.

Reflections on empirical contributions

The Democracy Square project was complex and, from my point of view, could not be considered an unqualified success. It was developed to increase participation and communication between citizens and politicians, but it was difficult to develop good indices to evaluate such intangible objectives. The members in the project group had very limited experience in similar projects. However, the project did offer the participants some important experiences that could be useful in the future.

The newly initiated project is still in its infancy and the conditions are now slightly different than when the Democracy Square was initiated. Interests in E-democracy projects have increased; more initiatives are made by central government; the press is more interested; and other municipalities have developed similar projects. Some issues are still unresolved. First, funding is difficult to get for projects without any clear objectives on cost savings or efficiency. E-democracy projects are very often developed as an add-on to existing systems. Second, it is difficult to find good ways to measure the attained effect. Further research is needed to focus on how to evaluate "soft values", like communication issues associated with E-democracy projects.

8.3 Future research

Introducing the E-democracy models and the E-democracy genre perspective can guide practice and research by identifying objectives and technological forms in E-democracy initiatives. This also shows a need for further research in this area that could contribute more knowledge to E-democracy initiatives.

The E-democracy models introduced here are based on theoretical and empirical research. Future research is needed to validate these models, specifically the new Partisan E-democracy model. A first attempt to validate these models took place through the conducted action case study. The models showed practical usefulness, but more research should be conducted to further validate and adjust these models for theoretical, empirical and practical usefulness in E-democracy projects.

The main contribution from this thesis concerning genres for E-democracy models is the link between IT and overall objectives. The identified E-democracy genres illustrate this connection and act as a starting point for the suggested process. Several issues should be elaborated on in forthcoming research. The identified genres for E-democracy are, by nature, dynamic and evolving. Research is needed to develop more knowledge on how different genres support different E-democracy models. Interesting changes may also occur by introducing new technology (e.g. by the diffusion of mobile based services). The conducted

action case study identified needs for more definitive knowledge on consequences like costs, time estimation and required user skills. Finally, due to the main focus of this thesis, the interesting link between E-based genres and more traditional genres is not discussed in detail here. Future research should address these concerns in order to add both more detailed knowledge on specific genres, and a broader understanding of how E-based genres work in relation to other communication genres in a democratic society.

The suggested process is introduced to guide E-democracy projects in their initiation phases. The process illustrates how the theoretical contributions of E-democracy models and E-democracy Genres can be applied for practical purposes. More research is needed to evaluate and further develop the suggested process. The action case study showed that the process needed further clarification and simplification as some participants found it to be too complicated. It also showed promising potential to allow participants to discuss their experiences and to reflect upon the process. Thus I suggest that research strategies such as action case and action research could be used to gain further knowledge on the suggested process.

Future research could also focus on how to evaluate E-democracy cases by linking knowledge of E-democracy models and E-democracy genres. The conducted action case study focused on the initiation of a new project. Its potential also for the evaluation phase is an interesting avenue of study. To identify the main challenges in the Democracy Square project, I evaluated postings based on democracy models (Bellamy, 2000) and communication patterns. Further research is needed to ascertain whether my suggested process could be used to analyze other E-democracy projects in a similar fashion.

E-democracy models provide a basis for specific, proactive research efforts for E-democracy by integrating theoretical and empirical literature in the field. However, more effort still needs to be directed toward building a dynamic experience base in order to further discuss particular E-democracy genres and to build a cumulative knowledge base for researchers and practitioners.

This thesis address the call for a better understanding of the link between technology and democracy (Aidemark, 2003; Anttiroiko, 2003; Bellamy & Taylor, 1998; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000; Schmidtke, 1998). I add to the discussion on the potential impact IT holds on processes of democratic decision making which is found to be a reason for limited success in E-democracy projects (Aidemark, 2003; Schmidtke, 1998). The E-democracy field in general calls for more research contributions based on solid theoretical grounds. Despite an increased interest in E-democracy by practitioners, public authorities and researchers, there is still a lack of empirical and theoretical research developed in quality publications.

In this thesis I drew upon established strands of theories and developed them to form a new knowledge base to further study the immature field of E-democracy. I demonstrate how using knowledge from established fields of research may enhance the E-democracy research area. Future research could profit by building more on current strands of theories from heterogeneous research areas to bring the E-democracy strand of research forward.

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Appendix A.

Research papers

Thesis paper 1

Democracy Squared, Designing On-Line Political Communities to Accommodate Conflicting Interests

Jeremy Rose and Øystein Sæbø

Abstract.
On-line political communities, such as the Norwegian site Demokratitorget (Democracy Square), are often designed according to a set of un-reflected assumptions about the political interests of their potential members. In political science, democracy is not taken as given in this way, but can be represented by different models which characterize different relationships between politicians and the citizens they represent. This paper uses quantitative and qualitative content analysis to analyze the communication mediated by the Democracy Square discussion forum in the first ten months of its life. In the quantitative analysis, citizens' and politicians' contributions are analyzed against four different democracy models: Consumer, Demo-Elitist, Neo-Republican and Cyber-Democratic. Whereas politicians' contributions mainly reflected the Demo-Elitist model, citizens' contributions tended to reflect the Neo-Republican model. In the qualitative analysis the discourse is analysed as repeating genres—patterns in the communication form which also reflect the conflict of interest between citizens and politicians. Though the analysis gives insight into the nature of the discourse the site supports, little is known about translating this kind of insight into better site design. We match the site's communication genres with known features of E-democracy sites to generate tentative design improvement possibilities.

1 Introduction

In the Norwegian local election in 2003, 58,8% of the electorate voted—the lowest turnout since 1922 (Statistics 2003). Voter turnout in western democracies is especially low among young people (Briony 2003). Low voting rates are often associated with a general disengagement from the democratic process which undermines the political mandate, and politically active members of the affected societies accept that engaging people in important community issues and in political and democratic processes is an important challenge (Hague 1999). New technology (particularly the rapid development of the internet) is changing conditions for communication and co-ordination (Van Dijk 2000), and has led to an increased interest in technology support for participation in the political process (often assumed to be an attractive form of expression for younger people). This is reflected in action plans such as eEurope 2005 (European-communities 2002) and eNorge 2005 (Government-Norway 2002). One particular form of technology mediated intervention is the online political forum, a virtual meeting place where citizens and politicians can discuss issues of local or national importance and their political expression and resolution. Such web sites now exist in all of the Scandinavian countries (usually in the form of experiments sponsored by government agencies).

Whereas there is a reasonably extensive theoretical discussion of internet democracy (one common way of addressing this topic through democracy models is elaborated in the next section), "comprehensive empirical studies of concrete initiatives has been sparse" (Jensen 2003, p. 30). Empirical studies are important in order to lean about the nature of the current experiments, which are far from universally successful, and to gain the insights necessary to improve them. There are a number of case studies of internet political participation (e.g., Ranerup 2000; Stanley and Weare 2004), but very few studies of internet-enabled political discourse (an exception is Jensen 2003), and we suggest that this type of analysis is valuable in providing potentially generaliseable understandings of the communication forms that political forums support. We were unable to find any studies which linked these empirical understandings to website design issues. A web-site designed to support a virtual political community is a form of communication media, but rather little is known about the communication or discourse that these sites enable, and less about the relationship between the design of the site and the communication it supports. Common sense would suggest that a communication media should be designed in the light of the discourses it enables, but this is not a common information system design principle. There are many ways of analysing communication (for example discourse analysis, content analysis, genre studies, hermeneutic studies, discourse analysis) but these are seldom focused on web-enabled political discourse, or linked to information system design. Genre is recognised as extremely important in the evolution of web design practice, and web designers are known to work extensively from their understandings of genre (Crowston and Williams 2000), but, to our knowledge, no descriptions of how to do this exist. Classic genre texts in the IS literature (Yates and Orlikowski 1992; Orlikowski and Yates 1994) relate genre studies to organisational analysis, not to software design work. Methodological support for genre analysis in an information support context is also targeted at organisational analysis, and falls short of providing software design guidelines (Spinuzzi 2003). Conventional system development methods base design work on user requirements, not communication analysis, making them hard to adapt. The language action schools contains many examples of analysis based on linguistic and organisational semiotics theories, including full blown information system design methodologies (Liu 2000), but usually link these to an older conventional system development paradigm, which is poorly adapted to modern web design. Web design

methodologies (Scharl 2000; Vidgen et al. 2002) are heavily dependent on older system development paradigm work practice analysis and user requirement analysis (here less relevant).

The project studied in this paper was designed to encourage political participation in Norway. The principal feature of Demokratitorget (Democracy Square) site is its discussion board, where citizens and politicians can initiate and participate in themed debates. The site initially flourished, with many contributions at the time of the Norwegian election, but later fell into decline and its future is now uncertain. Understandably, the project focused largely on the technical construction of the site, taking for granted that underlying conceptions of democracy, participation and the political process were shared and well-understood, and that the discussion forum was a suitable and un-problematic communication infrastructure for the type of discourse envisaged. We set out to: (1) understand the nature of the discourse on the site, and (2) find out whether suggestions for design improvements could be made on the basis of that understanding.

The paper uses content and genre analysis to analyze the discourse at Democracy Square against a democracy model theoretical framework which is commonly used in the e-democracy literature. The contributions of citizens and politicians are publicly available on the web-site, and are here treated as a text suitable for hermeneutic analysis. The analysis shows that the two groups consistently display adherence to a different model of democracy, and that the genres that they use to communicate also reflect this difference. Generating suggestions for design improvements to the site based on this analysis is a non-trivial research task, because of the absence of models for this kind of work. Here we tentatively adopt the approach of matching web site features and technologies commonly used in these types of site, with the genres and democratic models identified in the analysis.

2 Models of Democracy

Democracy is an important topic in the field of political science. A common way of characterizing different forms of democracy is the 'democracy model.' democracy models introduce coherent presentations of the characteristics of different democracy forms (which may either appear in practice, or be worked towards as ideal types). The models make it possible to compare different empirical situations, or different stakeholder perceptions. In this research, the models enable a theoretically based investigation of the expectation, motivations and interests of two stakeholder groups (citizens and politicians) taking part in web-facilitated politically oriented discourse.

Many different democracy models can be found. In a discursive deliberation model, (Eriksen and Weigård 1999) the importance of legitimising public action in an active communicative society is highlighted. In an aggregative democracy politics is the resolution of conflicting individual interests. Politicians are responsible for aggregating those interests as they occur via elections. (Eriksen and Weigård 1999). The role of participation has been highlighted in the participatory democracy model where equal rights can only be achieved in a participatory society which fosters a sense of political efficacy (Pateman 1970; Held 1996). A related model is the deliberative model (Lively 1975; Eriksen and Weigård 1999; Gimmler 2001). This theory highlights the role of open discussion, the importance of citizen participation, and the existence of a well-functioning public sphere. The models above are all founded on representative democracy, whereas the direct democracy model represents a radical alternative. In a direct democracy, network-based groups and individuals take over the role of traditional institutions (Held 1996; Bellamy 2000; Lynne 2004).

These models evolved as the individual projects of groups of societal commentators, and are therefore described in differing ways, making direct comparison difficult. However, a secondary literature analyses the different models and summarizes them according to shared characteristics—thus enabling comparison. Thus Held's (Held 1996) well-known ideal types comprise four historical models (Classical Athenian, Republicanism, Liberal and Direct Marxism) and four contemporary models (Completive Elitist, Pluralism, Legal and Participatory). In the classical (Athenian) democracy citizens had political equality and were free to rule and be ruled in turn. Personal liberty was dependent on political participation in Republicanism, and the objective was to balance power between people, aristocracy and monarchy. Liberal democracy was characterised by a representative government. Citizens were involved as voters, as representatives at the local level and as participators in public debate. The last historical model, the direct-democracy model, highlights the importance of bringing power to the people. Decisions were justified by consensus (communism), or by frequent elections giving mandates to government personnel (socialism). Competitive elitism represent Held's first modern democracy model. Experts representing (or claiming to represent) different interests in society act in policy networks. These political experts represent the elite, who are intensively involved in the formation of policy and definition of public services. In a pluralism democracy, a competitive electoral system with at least two parties secures government by majority and political liberty. The political system balances between legislature, executive, judiciary and administrative bureaucracy. The majority principle protects individuals from arbitrary government in a legal democracy. Effective political leadership is guided by liberal principles, and there is a minimum of state intervention in civil society and private life. Lastly, in a participatory democracy equal rights are achieved through a participatory process where a knowledgeable citizenry takes sustained interest in the governing process.

Held's framework forms the background for theoretical work relating information and communication technologies (ICT) and forms of political organisation (so-called Digital Democracy). Thus van Dijk (van Dijk 2000) drops the obviously less relevant historical models, and analyses the role of ICT in relation to Held's four modern democracy models (Pluralist, Participatory, Legalist and Competitive Democracy). He considers the models to be primarily distinguished by (1) whether the primary goal of democracy is opinion forming or decision making, and (2) whether the primary means of democracy is through representatives, or directly enacted by citizens. He describes four roles for ICT: allocation (one way distribution of information), consultation, registration (central collection of information including balloting) and conversation. He also adds a fifth model (libertarian) which emphasizes "autonomous politics by citizens in their own associations using the horizontal communication capabilities of the internet" (van Dijk 2000, p. 45).

A related, but simpler system of four democracy models is introduced by Bellamy (Bellamy 2000). Whereas van Dijk discusses the role of IT as a supplement to traditional communication mechanisms, Bellamy adds a coherent post-Internet democracy model (Cyberdemocracy) where the Internet no longer represents a supplement to traditional communication channels, but emerges as a crucial pre-condition for democracy. Bellamy's scheme is therefore the most technologically up-to-date, and has the virtues of relative simplicity, and explicit relevance to the digital democracy debate. It has been used before for various analytical purposes in this literature (Hoff et al. 2003). Therefore Bellamy's framework forms the basis for our quantitative content analysis.

The four Bellamy models (consumer, demo-elitist, neo-republican, cyberdemocractic) serve as "logically coherent constructs abstracted from specific social settings or from competing political values" (Bellamy 2000, p. 33). They seek to "ground electronic democracy in a set of rival discourses connecting democratic values to technological change" (Bellamy 2000, p. 33). The Consumer model focuses on the role of citizens as consumers of public services, whilst accepting well-established features of democracy such as parliamentary institutions, elections and parties. The main democratic value is the legal right to services, and the model seeks to re-focus democracy around the efficient provision of these services: value for money. The input part of the parliamentary chain of command is assumed to be un-problematical, so the democratic process is centred on the feedback and control mechanisms which allow citizens to monitor and influence politicians (service organizers): freedom of choice, freedom of information, influence and complaints procedures. Competent consumers also need to be well-informed; implying an important role for information systems. Better informed citizens are able to play a more effective role in controlling the bureaucracy (service providers) and choosing the right (service efficient) representatives. However citizen consumers limit their role in the democratic process to protecting their individual service entitlements and to voting. Politicians and administrators seek to legitimate their role as effective surveyors of consumer opinion and efficient service providers.

Demo-Elitist democracy also accepts traditional institutional features as the basis for democracy. Citizens' main interests in life are again assumed to lie outside serious politics, being focused on services and economic prosperity. This leads to the delegation of the political process to an elite of specialists and experts, whose task is to mediate conflicting interests and claims. Experts representing (or claiming to represent) different interests in society act in extended policy networks, forming the elite which is effectively involved in the formation of consensus, the articulation of policy and the defining of services. Such elites may easily become self-serving and self-replacing, in a clear degeneration of democracy (Hoff et al. 2003). Critical in the avoidance of such degeneration is openness and transparency in information. Information supply is vertical (for example between representatives and voters) and often uni-directional; that is the elite disseminate information to their different constituencies. Citizens primarily act by voting, whereas the elite seek to re-legitimize their position by displaying superior knowledge and abilities

Neo-Republican democracy focuses on the quality of citizen's participation and involvement, drawing inspiration from the classical republican (Athenian) model and Habermas' notion of the public sphere, the rational domain of political discourse. Citizens are assumed to be active, especially at micro- and local levels, with their citizenship contributing both to the emancipation of the political arena and to their own moral, social and intellectual development (e.g. Held's Developmental model). The model is rooted in radical assumptions of shared social rights and responsibilities, where the revitalizing of civic spirit is a central objective. IT facilitates an increased number of participants, higher quality discussion and social inclusion in decision-making—a kind of IT-mediated virtual public sphere which is in stark contrast to traditional interpretations of mass media. In this model politicians and citizens have a shared interest in dialogues and discourse leading to the formation of political opinion, with politicians playing first a facilitating role in the dialogue and later the role of professional policy formulators and executors.

The Cyber-Democratic model represents the most radical change to traditional democratic institutions and features. Traditional institutions lose power and influence to network-based groups forging identities for alienated individuals across society, nation, race and class. This

virtual society of networks is dependent on the use of the self-organizing internet communities. In this post-modern vision (or nightmare) of extended pluralism escaping the bounds of cultural hegemony, but struggling to retain social cohesion and collective political will, IT is no longer a supplement to traditional communication channels, but a condition for democracy. Political discourse and decisions are localized, fragmented, virtual, but executed primarily by citizens, and power is decentralized away from traditional institutions. The characteristics of the different models are summarized in table 1 which is adapted from (Tops et al. 2000).

Characteristics	Consumer	Demo-Elitist	Neo-Republican	Cyber-Democratic
Dominant democratic value	Freedom of choice	Effectiveness	Deliberation and participation	Community, acceptance of diversity
Citizen's role	Voting for representatives, (less active between elections)	Voting for representatives, (less active between elections)	Active citizens as opinion formers.	Active citizens as decision makers
Central form of political participation	Choice of public services	Consensus, creation, lobbying	Public debate, associations	Virtual debate, virtual and real actions
Political nexus	Producer/consumer relation	Expert discourse	Public sphere, media	Electronic discussion (Internet)
Main political intermediary	Service declarations, consumption data	Negotiation and campaign institutions	Meetings, hearings (real and virtual)	Electronic networks, electronic communities
Typical ICT application	Websites, citizen cards, databases	Websites, mail, information systems, voter compasses	Geographically located and moderated discussion groups	Self-organized discussion groups (virtual communities)
Main objectives for the use of ICT	Disseminating high quality information to citizens	Supporting vertical relations, transparency	Quality of discussion and bidirectional information	Strengthening the essential network
Dominant political issues	Data security, privacy, service delivery	Re-legitimation and re-orientation of governance.	Increasing participation, improving the quality of discussions	Increasing political reflexivity competences and autonomy

Table 1: Emerging models of democracy for the information age: applications, issues and ambiguities (adapted from (Tops et al. 2000))

3 Democracy Square

The project was initiated by Kristiansand city, East- and West-Agder regional municipalities in southern Norway early spring 2003, with support from the Norwegian government. One of the authors was a member of the project team and attended the development meetings. The project document describes a background of falling voter participation, reduced involvement in political parties and diminished local self-governance. Internet, mails and text messages

were seen as means to increase contact between politicians and electors. The communication process was assumed to be simplified and improved by not being dependent on direct synchronous communication. These technologies were intended to increase knowledge of political alternatives and thereby increase political engagement and strengthen local democracy. The project's objectives were to increase availability to information, democratic openness, and contact between citizens and politicians, and to improve citizens' engagement in the political process through IT and web-technology. The target user groups for the project were citizens, especially young people, and politicians. A representative from a local software firm took part in the project group from the beginning, contributing knowledge of design and contracting issues. The software firm is one of the largest public sector suppliers in Norway and their head office is located in the project area. One of their focus areas is e-democracy software. The project group signed a contract for the development of the site with this firm without a formal call for tenders. The result was Democracy Square (www.demokratitorget.no). The site offered links to the many local and national political parties, a (little used) notice board and some textual information about e-democracy, but its principle interest is the discussion board.

Figure 1. Categorization of the debates at the Democracy Square (www.demokratitorget.no)

The forum was set up with 25 discussion categories reflecting subjects of expected local political interest (see figure 1). The categorisation was made by the developers in the software firm and later discussed in the project group. Contributors could initiate sub-threads in the categories. All users had to register; but aliases were permitted to disguise identity if desired, and politicians were asked to submit the name of their party (but not all of them do). There were no further checks of identity. The site opened on 20.08.03 and activity peaked at the local election on 15.09.03 declining to little or nothing thereafter. In the 26 days between the opening and the election 525 contributions were added whereas 68 contributions were made in the 269 day from the elections to the data-gathering ended (17.06.04). In the period of our survey (from 20.08.03 until 17.06.04) there were 593 contributions made by 102 contributors. Contributors posted on average 5,81 messages. Less than one out of three contributors (31 out

of 102) was a politician, however the politicians were most active; half of the contributions were posted by this group (294 out of 593). Males represent 65% of users, while 46% were below 30 years old. Contributors used the 24/7 aspect of the forum, and many entries were posted whilst the majority of Norway's population were asleep.

The politically themed debates mainly concerned issues of local and national interest, but one discussion targeted democracy and the internet itself. Contributors agreed that dialog was important, but one very early commentator neatly summed up one of the forum's dilemmas:

I agree with Esben that dialog is important. However there will be a problem if it turns out that the political candidates don't take it (Democracy Square) seriously, but just consider it a kind of exercise in democracy. (Nickname 15-0803) (all quotations are translated from the original Norwegian)

Some of the early debate in this forum concerned the practical operation of the forum, both at the technical level (some complaints about navigation speed) and at the level of use policy and social convention. One contributor was enraged that some of his critical comments were posted but never displayed – he assumed they had been censured. The board moderators denied this (while retaining the right to censure 'inappropriate' material). It remained unclear what happened to the offending messages. An etiquette question arose over the question of how challenging, rude or offensive a contribution could be, and many contributions tried to impose limits - often replying to an offender with a direct reference to those limits:

I can't really say that I appreciate your way of making your point, but ... (Full name (Progress party), 20-08-03)

A convention that was built into the site, along with hierarchical threads, was the question and answer principle. A direct response to an earlier contribution was labelled 'Answer' by the software irrespective of its actual role in the dialogue. Contributors took up this principle and formulated many of their postings in this form; however using it for many different ends: sometimes to encourage new contributions, sometimes to change the subject, sometimes to close down an uncomfortable subject. A further difficulty was getting the right people to participate, with various contributors complaining about the absence of: politicians in general, contributors from one particular region, the young, and the more senior elected local politicians.

The project was evaluated in the autumn of 2003. The decision-makers seemed generally to believe in the future and potential of the site; but at the end of august 2004 the discussion board was suspended because of inadequate usage. It is at present unclear whether the site will be developed further.

4 Research Method

Entries in Democracy Square are exclusively textual and in principle form a document which can be analyzed by any recognized form of textual analysis. In addition the contributions show many of the characteristics of conversation, such as question and answer, thematic grouping, ordering, and obvious conversational devices such as reference to the previous contribution and changing the subject. The text is therefore suited to qualitative analysis within a philosophical framework of hermeneutics, and genre analysis. Foucaldian discourse analysis, deconstruction (Derrida 1982), semiotics, document analysis, and conversation analysis are suitable candidate analysis methods. Klein and Myers (1999) set out the principles of interpretive research (based on hermeneutics) as: the hermeneutic circle, contextualization, interaction between researchers and subjects, abstraction and

generalization, dialogical reasoning, multiple interpretation and suspicion. These principles (with the exception of interaction between researchers and subjects which is not available in text-based analysis) form the basis for our qualitative analysis. Content analysis (Berelson 1952; Silverman 2001) is chosen as the analysis method because the theoretical model outlined above offers clear initial analysis categories. However, in the analysis of the Democracy Square document, many other considerations relevant to the other forms of qualitative analysis are also taken into consideration. For instance the web-site has many genre-like features which concern its purpose, visibility, the structure of the contributions, the organisation of thematic threads and the question and answer form of individual contributions. Web-sites can be analysed as genres, and genre is known to be particularly important in the evolution and design of web sites (Crowston and Willams 2000). The discourse is not independent of its meta-discourse (Alvesson and Karreman 2000), but relates to the wider political discourse in Norway, and knowledge of the wider debate (such as the knowledge that a particular party has no realistic chance of attaining any political power) also colours the interpretation of contributions. Many observable features of formalized conversations in political discourse (the political interview, for instance) can also be found in the document, and recognized by relation to the hermeneutic whole or context.

In this study quantitative content analysis based on categories derived from Bellamy's democracy models is primarily used to analyze the purposes and interests of citizens and politicians, whereas a more grounded approach using qualitative content analysis and genre analysis is used to study the communication forms in which these purposes and interests are expressed. Suggestions for site design improvements are generated by a process of matching web technologies (derived from the relevant literature and study of relevant sites) to resulting genres.

4.1 Content Analysis

Content analysis provides "a relatively systematically and comprehensive summary or overview of the dataset as a whole" (Wilkinson 1997, p. 182). It operates by observing repeating themes, and categorizing them using a coding system. Categories can be elicited in a grounded way (built up from the data) or come from some external source (in this case a theoretical model). Simple quantitative content analysis produces counts of the respective frequency of occurrence of the categories, with the inference that higher counts imply some form of significance. Since these simple counting methods divorce occurrences from their context, much information relevant to the interpretation of the source material is inevitably lost. This can be somewhat rectified by adding qualitative content analysis (Wilkinson 1997): a form of discourse analysis where the thematic categories are studied in their location in the source text, where the addition of context can help to identify additional relevant factors such as irony and sub-textual meanings.

4.2 Genre Analysis

A genre is "a recognizable communicative event, characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by the members of the community in which it regularly occurs" (Bhatia 1993, p. 13). Genres are patterns of communicative acts (such as a menu in a restaurant) sharing similarities of structure, content, style, intended audience, purpose, form and functionality. They have genre rules which are socially decided and enacted, often without the participants being conscious of them (Yates and Orlikowski 1992). Digital or cyber genres can also be observed (home page, digital newspaper). Genre analysis is a form of discourse analysis where genres and sub genres are identified and their

characteristics, relationship and evolution described, often with a communications, media, linguistic, sociological or psychological backdrop.

4.3 Data Collection

The document analyzed represents the complete set of contributions to the discussion forum (Demokratitorget, 2004) from its launch in 20.08.03 to the data-capture date 17.06.04. Discussion forum contributions were pasted into a Word document in such a way as to maintain all the visible data and the thematic ordering.

4.4 Data Analysis Strategy

The thematic analysis of the data was performed using ATLAS.ti®, a conventional qualitative analysis tool. The analysis took two approaches, one theoretical, one grounded. In the theoretical analysis, the text was analyzed against headings taken from Bellamy's 'Models of Democracy' (table 1). The column 'typical ICT application' was ignored since the debate forum technology is known and the same. The forum contributors were divided into politicians and citizens. The principle purpose of this analysis is to discover which models of democracy underpin the forum discourse, and whether there are differences between politicians and citizens. Contributions or text passages typically require some interpretation before they can be allocated to a category and this interpretation process is described so that it is open to inspection. Multiple allocations, i.e., allocation to more that one category, were allowed. Simple counts of frequency of the categories offer a measure of which democracy models predominate.

The grounded analysis is of a more qualitative character. Here we examined the text in detail, first for more specific textual evidence of adherence to the political models and second for repeating types of contributions and interactions. Since a debate board is a part of a wider discourse, it can be expected that the conventions and structures of the wider discourse be at least partly adopted, and it is well understood that patterns and structures can be observed such discourse. These are often analyzed at the level of register, grammar, rhetoric or interaction (Bhatia 1993); however we choose to describe the repeating patterns as mini-genres. Mini-genres were here derived in a grounded manner from the text (rather than from a theoretical source), giving the opportunity for a more qualitative style of detailed analysis designed to display important features of the interaction. The resultant genres were then iteratively used as thematic categories and the text recoded, so that their frequency could also be counted. Since the genres themselves can also be related to the democracy models, this analysis both triangulates the earlier theoretical analysis, and exposes some more detailed ways in which the interactions operate.

5 The Debate at Democracy Square

5.1 Quantitative Content Analysis

In the time period studied, 593 contributions were posted to Democracy Square, organized into 147 different debates and made by 102 different authors. The quantitative part of the analysis sorts the contributions first by whether they are made by politicians (not all of the politicians identified themselves as such and some were identified by the researchers through contextual references) or citizens. The contributions are then sorted by which of the democracy models the contribution best relates to (each of the squares in the theoretical table is allotted a code). This requires some interpretation on the part of the researchers, because the contributors themselves do not refer directly to democracy models. Multiple coding for the

same contribution was allowed if it significantly changed focus. To illustrate the categorization process, two contributions and how they are interpreted are presented in Table 2. In the interpretation, the main focus is on distinguishing between democracy models, illustrated by the columns in table 3. Distinguishing between democracy model characteristics (the rows) proved to be difficult, both because of the multi-faceted nature of the contributions and the degree of interpretation required, and because of lack of precision in Bellamy's framework. The illustrative examples in table 2 also reveal difficulties in dividing contributions into precise cells. From our point of view, however, focus on the interests and motivations of contributors and aggregate democracy models is sufficient to further the study (this also means that there is no particular significance to blank cells in the analysis in table 3). All conclusions drawn from the quantitative analysis are based on the democracy model level, and qualitative content analysis is introduced for interpretations at a more detailed level.

Contribution	Interpretation	Coding
"This is one of the very few forums where each voter has the opportunity to ask critical questions and get answers from the politicians in the municipality. If Democracy is to survive, it is important that electors engaged themselves in important issues and use their power in elections instead of being disenfranchised by not using their right to vote" *(Politician, full name and party)*	Focus on the citizen-politician connection with questions and answers. However the citizens are asking the questions, and the specialist/ expert politicians have the answers. Citizens' primary task is confined to voting and thereby indirectly influencing politics. Citizen engagement is seen as the route to participation in elections	Demo-Elitist: Citizens role and form of Political participation
"I think all Norwegian citizens should have free medical, dental and other necessary health care in Norway (cosmetic or other prosperity things should be paid for. This will obviously cost money and should be introduced gradually. We'll start with free for everyone under 20 and over 65 (more suggestions for the organisation and introduction of free health care)" *(Citizen, given name)*	Suggestions for socialite improvements from a citizen expressed in debate forum. Implied desire to engage in political process and influence decision-making through agenda-setting and idea generation. Implication that public debate forums are an important part of political process and political opinion forming.	Neo-Republican: Political participation

Table 2: Examples of coding

In table 3, the contributions are sorted according to Bellamy's (Bellamy, 2000) models of democracy.

Characteristics	Consumer		Demo-Elitist		Neo-Republican		Cyber-Democratic	
	Politician	*Citizen*	*Politician*	*Citizen*	*Politician*	*Citizen*	*Politician*	*Citizen*
Democratic value	0	0	23	18	3	6	0	0
Citizen's role	0	1	7	2	0	2	0	0
Form of political participation	0	1	76	8	65	260	0	0
Political nexus	1	1	133	37	1	4	0	0
Main political intermediary	18	7	2	0	2	3	0	0
Main objectives for use of ICT	6	2	7	2	8	5	0	0
Dominant political issues	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Sum: contributions	**26**	**12**	**250**	**67**	**79**	**280**	**0**	**2**

Table 3: Contributions to the discussion board classified by models of democracy

The analysis shows that the Cyber-Democratic model is hardly represented in the forum, and the Consumer model also attracts little support. Politicians overwhelmingly adopt the Demo-Elitist model, whereas citizens overwhelmingly adopt the Neo-Republican model. A majority (133) of the politicians' contributions are coded under "political nexus" indicating that they relate to an expert discourse, in which political decision-making is carried out by the elite; a majority of the citizens' contributions (260) are coded under "form of political participation" indicating that they hope to contribute to the political debate as opinion-formers.

5.2 Qualitative Content Analysis

In this analysis the debate text is studied in more detail. Questions of structure, tone, style, intended audience, relation to context (particularly the text's position in relation to the question/answer debate form) are investigated with a focus on the citizen/politician relationship and the tension revealed in the previous quantitative analysis.

Excerpt 1

Ans(wer) *Is there anything that works in Kristiansand?*

Date: 04-09-03, 07:38

Author: (nickname)

(nickname) *thinks:*

Policing doesn't work in Kristiansand, Technical Service doesn't work in Kristiansand, Environmental Health (the health municipality) doesn't work in Kristiansand and the minor civil court doesn't work in Kristiansand, just to name a few things. Therefore yours truly isn't a bit surprised to find that demokratitorget doesn't work either, that could even be the point, that it's not supposed to work. Kristiansand municipality must be one of the biggest sheltered workshops in the country, in my opinion. My suggestion: vote against the present leader of Kristiansand (named politician), *Conservative. She has shown*

herself unfit for the job in my opinion, let's look for new talent. (Named politician) *is only interested in* (named politician), *that's fine in other contexts, but not for a city leader? Those of us unlucky enough to live in Kristiansand deserve someone better than* (named politician) *and the conservatives! Use Your Votes!* *yours* (nickname)

Ans There's a lot that works in Kristiansand
Date: 04-09-03, 08:53
Author:(name given) (Conservative)
(name given) *thinks:*
Nursery schools work in Kristiansand. During the last five years, the Conservatives have helped set up about 500 new nursery school places in the town. Kristiansand now has full nursery coverage. We also plan to built a further 600 places in the next term. Schools work in Kristiansand. Kristiansand tops the country in school investments. During the last 4 years we invested about 500 million crowns. A further 700 million crowns are earmarked in the budget up to 2006. Sports work in Kristiansand. (Other things that work in Kristiansand with examples of what the Conservatives have done). *These work in any case, just to name a few. I can name many more. The Conservatives have governed Kristiansand for many years. In this period, Kristiansand has grown to be one of the country's largest, and I would say, best cities. Those of us living in Kristiansand are lucky. I think most people agree with this! There's no reason to change something that's working and will build an even better city.* (Named politician) *has without doubt been a benefit for Kristiansand, and nobody should be in doubt that it is the people of the city, and only the people of the city she is interested in.*

Analysis, Excerpt 1: Challenge and Riposte: Here a citizen (whose identity is concealed behind an alias) makes a wide-ranging attack against the governing political party. The basis of the attacks is subjective experience ("in my opinion"), and no supporting facts, arguments or evidence are offered. The tone is cynical (suggesting a conspiracy theory type policy towards Democracy Square) and disrespectful towards politicians, even aggressive. There is a personal attack on a named politician (the municipality leader), on the basis of her personality rather than her policies. A repeating rhetorical device is used to focus attention ("doesn't work"). Speech use is a little colloquial and a few punctuation mistakes suggest limited education. The contributor addresses fellow citizens (not politicians) as if from a podium at a rally, making a speech rather than seeking information or raising a subject for debate. The intention is clearly to affect voting in the coming election.

The Conservative politician rebuts the attack point for point, echoing the rhetorical devices, but turning them to his advantage, and following exactly the structure of the citizen's contribution. However, the politician adds facts and statistics to his arguments, indicating that the rebuttal is reasoned and factual (thus emphasising both his status as expert and the subjective nature of the attack). The politician writes more formally and correctly in style, picking up the devices of the attacker, but using each of them subtly better to demonstrate intellectual or literary superiority—membership of the elite. The rhetorical devices of the attacker are thus turned against him. The politician ignores any substance behind the argument (whether the police and technical services are actually working), and shows no evidence of considering seriously the attacker's position or altering his own opinions. The challenge is simply rebutted.

Excerpt 2

Most people are concerned about…

Date: 21-08-03, 04:52

Author: (name given*) (Coast party)*

(name given) *thinks:*

…having enough nursery school places: Most families with small children have no chance of surviving on one income (despite the fantastic cashhelp) even if they wanted to. Cashhelp hasn't made the choice of one parent staying home with the children easy for most people. We need more nursery school places, and we need prices that most can afford. The consequence is that municipality funds must be earmarked – at least for a period. The Coast Party is concerned to work for families. The Coast party focuses on the protection of the families. Children's security and development are dependent on, amongst other things, that family finances are healthy enough for parents to manage their commitments. Greetings. (first name) *(Nr X candidate, Coast party to the regional municipality in East Agder)*

Analysis, Excerpt 2: Political Manifesto: A politician initiates a debate about a possible vote-winning issue. The politician stresses her political affiliation (the Coast party is a small local party with real little hope of winning the election), at the end of her contribution (though affiliations are already signalled in the author field). She also speaks in the name of the party ("the coast party is concerned..."), giving the party's stance on the issue and their policy if elected (earmarking funds). She emphasises her empathy with the voters through sarcasm ("fantastic cashhelp") and uses a familiar greeting and her first name to sign off. Although the contribution starts a new debate, there is no request for information, question, or invitation to others to contribute, and the contribution is clearly aimed at the audience of voters.

Excerpt 3

Energy cable to foreign countries
Date 24-08-03, 01:54
Author: (name given 1) *(politician Christian Peoples Party)*
(Name given 1) *thinks:*
Statnett is planning a big cable connection to England. That interests us in Agder because we have lost our European cable connection. More foreign cable connections will clearly benefit the supply situation in the long run, even if it doesn't solve next years' energy needs. But a relevant question from us in Sørlandet (name of the region) *is why lay a 600 km long cable from Vestlandet* (name of another region) *to England when the distance to Denmark is a fifth, 120 km? That doesn't mean the price will be a fifth, but probably significantly cheaper, with a correspondingly lower net rental.* (continues with details of latest regional energy net developments and plans, analysis of previous energy supply problems, possible connection points in Denmark and pollution consequences)

*Ans(*wer*): Energy cable to and from foreign countries.*
Date: 27-08-03, 10:33
Author: (name given 2) *(politician, Centre Party)*
(Name given 2) *thinks:*
The energy world is difficult to understand. My question to (name given 1) *is: could Norway become a net exporter of energy? My experience is that Denmark runs its energy plants full out so that we can buy energy from them at a cheap time of day. So can coal-fired electricity be used to pump out own 'water power' up again in the cylinders to give clean electricity the next morning. Then coal-fired electronic power can be used to pump our own 'water power' back into the water magazine once again in order to give clean electronic energy the next morning. Greetings* (name given 2) *Centre Party*

Ans: Use gas as well as water power in Norway!
Date: 31-08-03, 11:18
Author: (name given 3) *(politician Labour Party)*
(Name given 3) *thinks:*
The debate about power/energy supply can be approached from many angles. (Name given 1) brings up building small water power stations and talks about a cable to Denmark I'm surprised that when the environment is considered gas isn't mentioned, but only coal-fired energy in Europe.......which mean that we suffer the pollution effects. In Germany....... .(continues with discussion of German gas-fired plants and recommends similar policy for exploitation of Norwegian gas reserves) Have a good election: (name given 3)
nr. 7 AP's list

(Two more contributions from same contributors with statistics of power production and technical details)

Analysis, Excerpt 3: Rational Issue Debate: Three politicians debate an issue. The debate is entirely factual, displaying extensive knowledge of both Norwegian and foreign energy policies, and relying on many examples, facts and statistics. Political name-calling or in-fighting is avoided, with the politicians referring to each other politely, even in a friendly way ("have a good election") by name. Logical argumentation is emphasised, with the contributors summarising and developing each others points. The style is measured and considered, even polished. The conversation resembles a rather learned debate, but since the forum is rather an inefficient way of conducting such a conversation, it may be better to assume that the politicians are showing off their skills as specialists and experts in front of an audience of potential voters. The citizens do not join in the debate—possibly because the entry level is high and those without statistics are liable to look ignorant.

Excerpt 4

Apprenticeships
Date: 19-08-03, 05:44
Author (name given 1)
(name given) *thinks:*
Shouldn't someone do something for the many students with a technical education that can't get an apprenticeship because there aren't enough places for everyone????

Ans: apprenticeships
Date: 20-08-03, 07:14
Author: (Name given 2) *(Coast Party)*
(Name given 2) *thinks:*
*The intake of apprentices is first and foremost dependent on the situation in the job market. The politician's role should be to plan. In the building sector where I work, we have for some years had difficulties finding enough apprentices from the technical courses. In these times there is no need to encourage firms to accept apprentices. The situation was different in the first half of the 90's – there was a depression and few available apprenticeships. When this is the picture, politicians must prioritise enough resources to stimulate the intake of apprentices. My personal experience.............(*some more details and conclusions). *Yours* (first name*) (Nr.*(X).*candidate Coast Party West-Agder)*

Ans: apprenticeships
Date: 20-08-03, 10:39

Author: (name given 3*) (Centre Party)*

(name given 3*) thinks:*

I agree that it's wrong that there aren't enough apprenticeships. Vest Agder municipality, who together with the business community are responsible for these workplaces are actually the best in the country when it comes to available apprenticeships. One can likewise say at there ought to be an apprenticeship for everyone that needs one. It seems some businesses don't prioritise it highly enough. It would probably help if the students pressurised the businesses they know to set up apprenticeships. In the last resort it's the politicians' responsibility and they should get their fingers out.

Yours (name given 3), *Nr.(X).candidate Kristiansand Centre Party.*

(Two more contributions from a citizen expanding the debate and encouraging name given 3 to take action *('get your finger out'))*

Analysis, excerpt 4: Respectful Question and Answer: This excerpt takes the form of a question posed in a polite way by a citizen. The question is agenda setting for the politicians, still contains an element of critique with its slightly exaggerated question form and multiple question marks ("shouldn't anyone……….????"), but is not overtly aggressive. It invites responses both from citizens and politicians. The politicians who reply adopt the demo-elitist expert tone (but without displaying or showing off so much) and focus on the issue which they also clearly consider important and accept responsibility for. They also sign with their political affiliations and make political points ("……best in the country"), but without crowding the debate with party political competition. Citizens are not excluded and also take part in the debate. Contributions leave the debate open rather than trying to close it down. "Name given 3" is an established politician likely to be re-elected (and the last contribution targets him as the politician who should take action), so it is also likely that the debate has contributed in some degree to political opinion forming and decision-making, and to future engagement of the neo-republican citizens involved.

Excerpt 5

Care Jumping

Date: 07-09-03, 12:28

Author: (name given)

(name given) *thinks:*

Care for the weakest in society has shown itself to vary more and more between municipalities. The group I know best is handicapped children, since I myself have a handicapped daughter. Families end up moving to a different municipality more and more often to get a care offer that is satisfactory or acceptable. This is a painful experience that underlines that your child isn't 'economic'. Kristiansand county, where I live, is at the moment, a municipality that such families like to move TO. The question is whether it is really OK that a municipality tries to avoid responsibility for children that, from birth, aren't 'economic', and in this way forces families to move to a more responsible municipality.

(No further contributions)

Analysis, Excerpt 5: Unanswered Question: Here a citizen initiates a debate on a sensitive topic. The citizen gives his name, rather than choosing to use an alias. He clearly speaks from personal experience, making him a kind of expert in the field, but is restrained in his descriptions, making no accusations or judgments (though the judgements are implied) and speaking with dignity about what is clearly painful and difficult in his life. He carefully generalizes the problem to a group of families, thus avoiding an over-emotional statement about his own situation (which is easy to dismiss), and becoming the spokesman for a group

of parents. He respectfully sticks to the debate question and answer format, formally posing a question ("is it really OK………?") for others to respond to, though making it clear what his position is. The question becomes, however a rhetorical question which it is hard to reply 'yes' to. The issue is familiar to everyone who lives in a developed welfare society, and clearly a real political difficulty worthy of discussion, pointing at the tension between the two political duties of care and financial accountability. However it attracts no further contributions. Perhaps the citizens feel that the issue is already well-expressed, and they risk interfering with a personal sorrow, perhaps the politicians feel that the issue is a hot-potato, a no-win situation where they can never be the expert in relation to the contributor's personal experience and whatever they respond is liable to be interpreted negatively. Or perhaps nobody saw the contribution.

The excerpts discussed in the previous section are representative of their type in the text, and illustrate the next analysis, where mini-genres of contributions are inductively derived from the qualitative analysis, and then used as categories in the re-coding of the text. These genre categories are counted to give a rough indication of their significance in the text, and their relationship to the democracy models highlighted in table 4.

Genre name	Characteristics	Principal democracy model	Example	Occurrence
The Challenge and Riposte	Criticism of, or concern about political events, decisions or persons voiced by citizens who express their opinions using a challenging, sometimes aggressive tone. The expressed opinion is often followed by a more or less controversial, sometimes rhetorical question. Politicians rebut or deny the criticism using rational argument and factual examples (emphasising their role as elite/specialists). In addition they often comment on the citizens' tone – suggesting that it should be more reasoned, un-emotional, concrete or factual. They often try to close the debate, offering no questions or invitations for further suggestions.	Citizens: Neo-Republican Politicians: Demo-Elitist	Excerpt 1	303
The Political Manifesto	Politicians act as explicit spokespersons for their party, giving the party's message for the solution to a political problem or debate. No invitation to continue the debate is offered, and the debate often closes.	Demo-Elitist	Excerpt 2	96
The Rational Issue Debate	Politicians discuss an issue (as if in front of an audience of citizens). The tone is rational, using reasoned argument, and introduces many factual examples and expert knowledge (effectively excluding the average citizen). The politicians refer to each other's points and political affiliations, using first names, giving the impression of an elite club.	Demo-Elitist	Excerpt 3	80
The Respectful Question and Answer	Citizens generate questions about issues of concern (agenda setting) but use a respectful tone which acknowledges the expert status of the politician. The politicians reply in a factual way. The answer often includes a description of what the party has done or will do to fix the problem. This genre can also be framed the other way round, with politicians asking for information or opinions from citizens in order to help frame their (expert) judgments.	Citizens: Neo-Republican Politicians: Demo-Elitist	Excerpt 4	48
The Unanswered Question	A citizen formulates a (respectful) question in order to set an issue (which they consider important) on the agenda, but no politician comes forward to answer it, and the debate ends.	Neo-Republican	Excerpt 5	23

Table 4: Genres in the debate forum: characteristics and frequency of occurrence

It can be seen that the genres identified in this analysis can be seen to further the differing interests of politicians and citizens in different ways. These interests can also be related to the original democracy models. Demo-elitist interests of politicians are supported by political manifestos and rational issue debates, neo-republican interests of citizens by unanswered questions, but not necessarily in ways which are particularly productive for the evolution and engagement of the community as a whole. Challenge and ripostes were predominant, but here the differing interests seemed mainly to conflict, frequently leading to termination of the debate. Only in the respectful question and answer debates could both democratic models find sufficient common ground to serve the ends of both groups.

6 Discussion: Design Considerations for Democracy Square

At Democracy Square, notes from the project meetings suggest that the project and design team shared an uncritical enthusiasm for the new-internet-mediated political meeting place which might be characterised as cyber-democratic (however we made no formal analysis here, and lack sufficient evidence to demonstrate this). They imposed only a minimal structure upon the discussion board and assumed that the virtual community would (first) come to the site, and (second) self-organise into effective discussion forums communicating in meaningful ways and contributing in some effective way to the political process, perhaps also contributing to changing that process. However, several factors suggest that Democracy Square is not an unqualified success. Since the election, activity at the site has been limited, with many discussions fizzling out in unanswered questions, and the discussion board is now suspended. There can be many factors affecting the success or failure of on-line communities, including marketing, the existence of competing sites, the achievement of critical mass, and the funding model. In addition it may be natural to expect a cyclical pattern of higher participation around election times. However, in this section we focus on site design issues; asking the question "how can the site be improved through the insights delivered by in the preceding analysis?" We first summarize the analysis conclusions, then point at the underlying design problem, and finally discuss some design suggestions for the site.

6.1 Analysis Conclusions

Our democracy model analysis of the discourse at Democracy Square raises a problem for the design and management of on-line political communities. The problem could broadly be described as a conflict of interest between politicians and citizens. Politicians' demo-elitist interests can be described as demonstrating their specialist/elite abilities through rational argumentation to a broad range of voters in order to be (re)elected. Citizens neo-republican interests can be described as engaging politicians in discourse in order to set agendas and influence political decision making, as well as affecting the result of elections. It seems possible, (without having conducted any study to investigate) that such a conflict of interest between politicians and politically active citizens is both a persistent and widespread feature of western style democratic discourse, which is unlikely to be changed in the near future by the emergence of the internet.

If democracy model analysis helps to establish the nature of the political discourse at Democracy Square, then genre analysis establishes that the communicative interactions of politicians and citizens are not random, but fall into identifiable repeating patterns (which can also be related to genres in the wider political discourse). The different interests of politicians and citizens are enacted through these patterned communicative interactions. Many of the conversations at Democracy Square could be analyzed as partly or wholly unsatisfactory (not

successfully promoting their interest) for one group or for both. In challenge and riposte conversations (the most extensively apparent genre), the citizen tries to influence the political agenda but is simply rebutted by the politician. The citizen's aim is clearly not achieved, but the politician's argument is un-likely to impress the challenger, and it is very unclear whether there is any larger audience of potential voters, so the politician is likely to end up equally dissatisfied. Political manifestos and rational issue debates serve politicians' demo-elitist ends, but do not engage citizens, and are therefore broadcast to small numbers of already committed voters. These type of contributions were typically made by less well-established politicians (or parties unlikely to be elected), presumably as a low cost (but low impact) type of campaigning. Unanswered questions typically raise citizens' issues for consideration in the political arena, but politicians do not choose to consider them. One genre where both sides seem at least partly to meet is in the respectful question and answer. Here citizens raise an issue of concern, but also bow to the politician's status as specialist/expert, allowing the politician to make a genuine attempt to remedy the problem or take the issue up for further consideration in the political arena. This genre (though a minority genre) seems to serve both politicians' and citizens' interests, and may genuinely contribute in a small way to the political process and the engagement of citizens in the manner that the project team envisaged.

6.2 The Design Problem

The next obvious question is whether such an understanding of the political discourse at Democracy Square can lead to better practice in the design and management of the site, and to the establishment of a thriving virtual political community. Such practice improvements would accommodate the democratic conflict, perhaps by offering better tailored possibilities for both sides to express their interests, and support communicative interaction genres which help the community to function well. Such a discussion has two interlinking components: (1) the design of the site, and (2) the development and management of the virtual community; however here we primarily focus on site design. As discussed in the introduction, relating communication and discourse analysis to web-design is a non-trivial research problem, without much in the way of guidance, methodological help or prior research to help.

In the absence of reliable knowledge about the translation of democratic and genre understandings to software design, the suggestions that we make for design improvements will of necessity be exploratory.

6.3 Design Considerations

The relationship between the design of a discussion forum and the patterns of communicative interaction that the discussion forum mediates is not known. In the case of Democracy Square, we could hypothesize that *design features (forced categorization of users as politicians and citizens, structuring of all contributions as questions and answers) might contribute to the predominance of challenge and riposte type interactions, which leave users frustrated and contribute to the death of the forum.* However we would have to conduct another piece of research to discover how likely this was. Neither are we able to categorize some kinds of interactions as 'good' and others as 'bad' (though we suspect that interactions which serve the interests of neither citizens nor politicians are not very profitable), or suggest that one democracy model is preferable to another. Therefore the criterion we use for design modifications should simply be those of viability, critical mass and sustainability. Any design improvement which users are happy with, which leads to more users making more interactions, which therefore leads to continued support for the survival of the site, is desirable. Web technologies are extremely varied, and limited largely by imagination and

cost, which means that it is possible to conceive of a wide range of features which could be used to develop Democracy Square. The principle we use to make design suggestions is to match web technology features with: (1) demo-elitist interests of politicians and neo-republican interests of citizens, and (2) identified mini genres. The web technologies are primarily derived from study of the digital democracy literature. This can lead to design improvement suggestions which can later be evaluated, costed and prioritized.

6.4 Design Suggestions for Democracy Square

Opportunities for development of the Democracy Square site are given in table 5. The suggested web features are taken from reports of similar sites in the literature and the examination of sites on the web. In each case the web-feature is matched with the democracy model and genre that it could help to support.

Genre name: The Challenge and Riposte Principal democracy model**:** Demo-Elitist and Neo Republican		
Web-features	*Characteristics*	*Literature source*
Chat-rooms	Chat-rooms encourage spontaneity, less formal and well-considered contributions than discussion threads.	(Hill and Hughes 1998; Docter et al. 1999)
E-docket/ Dialogue system	Focused docket (short summary) for particular timely political issues; facilitates easy review of discussion threads and attracts new stakeholders into debate.	(Aidemark 2003; Stanley and Weare 2004)
Anti-campaign sites	Under election anti-campaign sites may occur, spoofing real campaign sites. The tone is often less formal and more aggressive than in a regular discussion forum.	(Hurwitz 1999)
Virtual petitions	Citizens join forces at the forum to articulate a challenge or complaint which is harder for politicians to rebut.	(Macintosh 2004)
On-line voting	Voting- for instance on specific issues as the culmination of a debate, makes it harder for politicians to neglect citizen opinion.	(Borins 2002; Aidemark 2003; Grönlund 2003; Biasiotti and Nannucci 2004)
Genre name: The Political Manifesto Principal democracy model**:** Demo-Elitist		
Web-features	*Characteristics*	*Literature source*
Party websites	Parties are able to express their opinion without being interrupted by other stakeholders.	(Heidar and Saglie 2003; Hoff et al. 2003)
Inquiring information	Adds the opportunity for a citizen to inquire political documents.	(Hurwitz 1999)
Super-sites	On-line different candidates can be presented and compared during/before an election.	(Hurwitz 1999)
Voter Compasses	Match citizen's preferences on an issue to the best-corresponding party or politician.	(not identified)
Campaign sites	Campaign sites may have e-mail feedback capabilities, polling mechanisms & fundraising forms etc.	(Hurwitz 1999; Borins 2002; Hoff et al. 2003)
Web logging	An online diary where politicians and citizens can express more personally their opinions.	(Macintosh et al. 2005)
Politicians corner	Introduction to an issue debate where each party sets out its position.	(Gross 2000)
Broadcast opportunity	Any opportunity a politician has to deliver a message to multiple voters: home page, email lists, pop-up message and so on.	(not identified)

City Halls	Developing service-oriented interactive city halls, highlighting informing about services, access to information and the web.	(Riedel, Dresel et al. 1998; Ho and Ni 2004; Myles 2004)

Genre name: The Rational Issue Debate Principal democracy model**:** Demo-Elitist		
Web-features	*Characteristics*	*Literature source*
Round table dis-cussions	Introduction to an issue debate where each party set's out its one position.	(Stanley and Weare 2004)
Broadcast meetings	Provide on-line transmissions of meetings. It is also possible to add opportunities to interact via the web.	(Aidemark 2003)

Genre name: The Respectful Question and Answer Principal democracy model**:** Demo-Elitist and Neo Republican		
Web-features	*Characteristics*	*Literature source*
Develop Netiquette/ User agreements	Discussion rules and etiquette need to be discussed and agreed by the users	(Jensen 2003; Stanley and Weare 2004)
E-debates via mail and online posting	Political debate focusing on a specific topic addressed to specific politicians through email. The content and tone may be more formal a chat room	(Aikens 1998)
Citizen Panel	New proposals/decisions are tested against the opinions of a citizen panel.	(Aidemark 2003)
Contact information for politicians	Information on how to get in touch to ask the politicians.	(not identified)
Web-meetings with politicians	Arrange meeting on-line with politicians. Citizens may pose questions beforehand or during the meeting and can have direct response to their questions	(Gross 2000)

Genre name: The Unanswered Question Principal democracy model**:** Neo Republican		
Web-features	*Characteristics*	*Literature source*
Directory for further action	Add information on what to do and how to contact the right person when your issue is not adopted for debate, or not taken seriously.	(not identified)
Identify who is responsible for responding	By stipulating who's responsible for responding, users can increase pressure for an answer.	(not identified)

Table 5: Opportunities for development of Democracy Square based on known web technology features

Demo-Elitist features enhance politicians' ability to broadcast their messages and display their skills to multiple voters (broadcast and display). Neo-Republican features enhance citizens' capacity to exert influence in the political process, sometimes by enabling them to act together (join forces and pressurize). Some features are able to advance both groups' interests. Each of the suggestions is related to a mini-genre, facilitating discussion of the types of interaction users are engaging in, the strengths and weaknesses of those interaction types and strategies for developing the web-site to support particular types of interaction.

Though we are able to generate suggestions for improvements to Democracy Square by this analytical matching process, it's hard to further prioritise the suggestions. Many political, strategic and resource questions are involved which can better be resolved by the site's sponsors, developers and users.

7 Conclusions

In this article we set out to: (1) understand the nature of the discourse at Democracy Square, and (2) make suggestions for site design improvements on the basis of that understanding. To these ends we studied the contributions made to the political on-line forum Democracy Square, which were treated as a text and submitted to textual analysis. Whereas quantitative content analysis based on categories derived from Bellamy's democracy models offered us insight into the *purposes and interest*s of citizens and politicians, a more grounded approach using qualitative content analysis and genre analysis allowed us to specify the *communication forms* in which these purposes and interests are expressed. The analysis showed that politicians usually adopted a Demo-Elitist model whereas citizens usually adopted a Neo-Republican model. Politicians set out to demonstrate their specialist/elite abilities through rational argumentation and to broadcast their policies to a broad range of voters in order to be (re)elected. Citizens engaged politicians in discourse in order to set agendas and influence political decision making. This basic conflict of viewpoints and interests was underlined by the analysis of the communication forms through qualitative content analysis, which revealed repeating mini-genres in the discourse: challenge and riposte, political manifesto, rational issue debate, respectful question and answer, and unanswered question. These mini-genres also reflected the different interests of citizens and politicians. Our commonsense heuristic suggests that these insights obtained by textual and discourse analysis should help the design process (a communications medium should be designed in the light of the communications it enables), but we were unable to find good normative theory to help us with this particular design task. We adopted instead a matching process, where we supported stakeholder purposes and interests, and the communication forms they used (here represented by democratic models and mini-genres) with known technology features of political web-sites. This allowed us to generate possible design improvements for the site. The matching was an exploratory research process, which we were not able to take further without the involvement of the Democracy Square project members and sponsors.

The project group responsible for Democracy Square apparently (and understandably) took for granted that underlying conceptions of democracy, participation and the political process were shared and well-understood, and that the discussion forum was a suitable and un-problematic communication infrastructure for the type of discourse envisaged. Our analysis shows that this was not the case, and we suspect (but cannot demonstrate) that interests con-flicts and difficulties with the communication forms are partly responsible for the decline in usage of the site. We also think that the site could be designed (and managed) differently, in a manner that allows both politicians and citizens to achieve their interests and purposes, and express them in communication forms which do not necessarily end in conflict or disillusion. We showed some of the technology features which could be employed to support different communication forms. Such interest conflicts between politicians and politically active citizens might be seen as reasonably fundamental to advanced democracies, and we would expect these kinds of research results to be generaliseable and to be replicated in future studies. Neither is the advent of the Internet likely to change this relationship in the foreseeable future, even though Bellamy's cyber-democracy model envisages this possibility. This does not mean that democracy sites are doomed to failure any more than it means that the wider political discourse cannot function; however it does means that naïve democracy site design which assumes that political debate will automatically flourish on the web is likely to run into problems. Scandinavian democracy site promoters need to acknowledge interest conflicts as something which should be explicitly attended to in the design and management of on-line communities. They need to accommodate (or square) both sets of interests.

The establishment of a well-functioning democratic virtual community has many aspects, but we chose to focus in this article on the design of the web-site. The implication of this research is that understanding of the democracy interests of different stakeholder groups, and the different genres they use to express those interests in on-line political communities might help in more realistic and user-focused design and development of web-sites. This translates into a more general principle: the design of a communication medium should reflect the nature of the communication it supports. However translation of theoretically derived democracy, discourse and genre insights into concrete design suggestions is a non-trivial research problem. Web-site designers intuitively use democracy and genre understandings to help them in their work, but there is no commonly understood design method or principle to help with this. If analysis of discourse and communication can be used to support the design of communication-oriented websites, then how can this be done? Our exploratory research process raises more research questions that it answers. Which of the many available communications analysis methods are suitable? Is a theoretical foundation (e.g., democracy models) necessary, or can the analysis be grounded? How can it operate in a green field (new development) situation where there is no existing discourse to analyse? How can the link between analysis and design be made in a convincing way? How can theoretical styles of analysis be made accessible and useable for practitioners?

Despite these questions and reservations, we conclude that it is possible to use communications analysis to design more innovative democracy sites which explicitly support different interests and modes of expression, and will thus be attractive to users. However little is currently known about how this can be done, either theoretically or practically, and this will be the subject of future research. A wider research implication is that it might be possible to incorporate theoretical analysis, content analysis, and genre study iteratively into the design of internet mediated communication media.

We hope that this research agenda will further contribute to the development of well-functioning virtual political communities where different, but legitimate political interests can be accommodated - democracy squared.

Acknowledgement

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Models of E-Democracy

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Abstract.
Several theories of E-Democracy have been presented, and implementations of and experiments in E-Democracy emerged. However, existing literature on the subject appears rather noncomprehensive, lacking an integrated basis for gathering knowledge in the future. After an analysis of theories of E-Democracy versus implementations reported in related literature, we address the need for a model generally absent from contemporary theoretical literature: the Partisan model of E-Democracy. We aim to simplify the current "jungle" of E-democracy models into four idealised models: the Liberal, the Deliberative, the Partisan, and the Direct. We discuss how current theories of E-Democracy, in addition to reported implementations, may be covered by these models.

The explanatory potential of these four models is illustrated by analysing implementations of a communication technology for E-Democracy, the web-based discussion forum. We argue that, instead of viewing technology such as the Internet as a "black box," any implementation of EDemocracy should be adapted to the specific democracy model(s) pursued by a particular initiative. In addition, E-Democracy researchers could be more specific about their standard of democracy, in order to avoid artificial comparisons or criticisms of contemporary E-Democracy without an explicit framework of criteria. Finally, we discuss the possibilities of unifying the ideals from different models on E-Democracy. We suggest that any context of E-Democracy may in fact require elements from all four models to stay dynamic over time.

Keywords: E-Democracy, democracy models, literature review.

I. Introduction

New technology, particularly the rapid development of the Internet, changes the conditions for communication and co-ordination and increases the interest in technology support for participation in political processes [Van Dijk, 2000]. The concept of E-Democracy refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in political debates and decision-making processes, complementing or contrasting traditional means of communication, such as face-toface interaction or one-way mass media. Initiatives for E-Democracy from the local municipality level [Grönlund, 2003, Sæbø and Päivärinta, 2005] to international programmes [Commission, 2002], for instance e-Europe 2005, are addressing a belief that the new ICT may increase democratization.

The need for empirical studies and subsequent theory-building in the field are addressed in Andersen and Henriksen [2005] and in Grönlund [2004]. Nevertheless, despite idealistic intentions of presenting ground-breaking E-Democracy theories and experiments, their impact on public participation in most cases remains modest [Brants et al., 1996, Hoff et al., 2003]. Many initiatives address vaguely the actual democracy model or specific aims pursued. Mixed expectations among citizens and politicians on E-Democracy are reported by Rose and Sæbø [2005]. Responding to calls for theory-building in the field, we review theories and empirical studies and suggest an integrated framework of four idealised models of E-Democracy.

The remainder of the paper begins with an introduction of our review process (Section II) . Subsequent to an analysis of the theories of E-Democracy versus the implementations reported in the existing body of literature (Section III), we address the need for a model of E-Democracy, which is currently absent in contemporary theoretical literature: the Partisan model on E-Democracy (Section IV). Our framework consists in total of four idealised models of E-Democracy: the Liberal, the Deliberative, the Partisan, and the Direct. We will illustrate how current theories of E-Democracy, in addition to reported practical implementations, are addressed by these models. The framework addresses shortcomings in current implementations of E-Democracy versus the theoretical recommendations. In theoretical literature, emphasis has been on Direct democracy. However, this theory remains largely absent from the reports on actual implementations of E-Democracy.

We illustrate the explanatory potential of these four models by analysing implementations of one specific communication technology in connection with E-Democracy, the web-based discussion forum, in accordance with the framework (Section V). Finally, we discuss the possibilities of unifying the ideals from different models on E-Democracy in the implementations (Section VI). We suggest that any aspect of E-Democracy may in fact need parts of all four models to stay dynamic over time.

II. Research Approach

A great number of reports on various E-Democracy implementations have been published. Although E-Democracy is mentioned in reviews of E-Government [Andersen and Henriksen, 2005, Grönlund, 2004], we found few reviews of the empirical E-Democracy literature that summarize previous research with the purpose of understanding use of ICT for E-Democracy in general. A research review summarising this literature is valuable for further development and research in the field [Cooper, 1998, Hart, 2001, Webster and Watson, 2002]. Based on this literature review, an E-Democracy framework is presented. To illustrate the explanatory

potential of the framework we evaluate cases of E-Democracy discussion forums related to the suggested models of E-Democracy.

Paper collection

This paper is based on reviews of two strands of research. A review of theoretical contributions on democracy models identifies forms of democracies as ideal types. Our subsequent review of E-Democracy cases and initiatives allow us to summarise trends and focus on areas which were realized in practice.

The review process resembles a method followed by Andersen and Henriksen [2005]. Online research databases (EBSCO Host, Sage, IEEE Xplore, Communications of AIS and ACM Digital Library) were consulted in November and December 2004. Subsequent searches were completed by the summer of 2005. During the search, the following keywords were used: Edemocracy, digital democracy, electronic democracy, democracy and Internet, democracy and information systems. In addition to articles in journals, we found it necessary to widen the selection of literature sources used because few articles had been published in prestigious journals. Hence, academic conference contributions were included (whereas conference proceedings without references to earlier academic contributions were excluded).

The initial screening excluded solely conceptual suggestions lacking empirical evidence (apart from reviews and contributions of discussion models of Democracy), and articles with only aperipheral reference to E-Democracy. For example most submissions from Communications of the ACM special issue on E-Democracy [Grönlund, 2001] are not included in the review due to their conceptual focus, with the exception of Åström's [2001] article, which addresses democracy models in particular. The issues of e-voting, the digital divide, and ICT and development were also excluded from the review. Apart from recognizing the extensive visibility of e-voting in the literature in general (see Altman and Klass, [2005] for an introduction to this literature), we included no review of characteristics of e-voting technology as such. A great proportion of e-voting research focuses on the technical construction and legal aspects of using the technology, instead of reporting on actual implementations of e-voting systems. Sometimes, the issue of the digital divide is mentioned, e.g. in relation to the challenges of guaranteeing access to digital information and democratic applications. The digital divide is also discussed in relation to the field of ICT and development in developing countries. However, for the purpose of our research, the issues of the digital divide and ICT and development relate to the process of democratization in general and should remain in the realm of nation-wide development policies and infrastructures rather than to focus on actual solutions for E-Democracy.

The number of contributions was increased during the reading of articles by using citation indexes (using ISI Web of Science Citation Index) and by following references to literature not identified earlier.

Data analysis strategy

The data analysis took two approaches iteratively, one theoretical and one grounded. The theoretical review was first conducted to form an integrated framework in order to classify the empirical literature later on. However, while reading the empirical research and reports of Edemocracy implementations, we found that some focused on concerns that remained unaddressed in the theoretical democracy models literature. Hence, our elaborated framework of E-democracy models was also grounded on the review of the empirical literature, now adding to the theory.

III. Current Models on E-Democracy

A democracy model is an idealised form of democracy which declares a set of ideals about how democracy should take place. Different frameworks and categorizations of democracy models have emphasized varying characteristics to outline the differences.

Models described as individual projects

Some models emerge as individual projects of groups of social scientists, and are therefore described in differing ways, making direct comparison difficult. According to the Aggregative democracy model, politics is the outcome of conflicting individual interests [Eriksen and Weigård, 1999]. Politicians are responsible for aggregating differing interests as they occur through elections [Eriksen and Weigård, 1999]. A similar model is the Thin democracy model [Åström, 2001] in which the citizen is regarded as uninterested in politics, and the elite competes for the citizens' votes.

The Participatory democracy model emphasises the importance of participation; equal rights can only be obtained in a participatory society which encourages a sense of political efficacy [Held, 1996, Pateman, 1970]. Related models are the Deliberative model [Eriksen and Weigård, 1999, Gimmler, 2001, Lively, 1975] and the Strong model [Barber, 1984, Åström, 2001]. These models emphasise the role of public discussions, the importance of citizen participation, and the existence of a well-functioning public sphere.

The models above are all founded on representative democracy, whereas the Direct democracy model represents a radical alternative. In accordance with the Direct democracy model, network-based groups and individuals take over the role of traditional institutions [Bellamy, 2000, Held, 1996, Lynne, 2004]. As well, the Quick democracy model [Åström, 2001], allows that the majority should directly influence decision making, although the representative models of decision-making can be seen as necessary in certain situations.

Frameworks of democracy models

A body of theoretical literature on democracy analyses the different models and compares their characteristics. Held's [1996] ideal forms contain four historical models: (Classical Athenian, Republicanism, Liberal, and Direct Marxism) and four contemporary models (Completive Elitist, Pluralism, Legal, and Participatory). In the Classical (Athenian) Democracy the state was governed by a general assembly of all male citizens, where they possessed political equality and had the opportunity to rule and be ruled in turn. What characterises Republicanism is that personal liberty is dependent on political participation, and the objective is to balance power between citizens, aristocracy, and monarchy. Liberal Democracy is characterised by a representative government. Citizens are involved as voters, as elected representatives at the local level, and as participators in the public debate. The latest historical model, the Direct democracy model, emphasises the importance of bringing power to the general public. Decisions are justified by consensus (communism), or by frequent elections giving mandates to elected members of government (socialism).

Competitive elitism is represented in Held's first model on modern democracy. Experts represent (or claim to represent) different interests in society and act in policy networks. Political experts are heavily involved in the formation of policies and the definition of public services. According to the Pluralism democracy model, a competitive electoral system, consisting of a minimum of two parties, secures the government through electoral majority and political liberty. This political system divides power through checks and balances into

three branches of government: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial, in addition to the operational administration. In the Legalist democracy model, the majority principle protects individuals from random governance. Effective political leadership is underpinned by liberal principles, characterised by minimal state intervention with civil society and the general public's private life. The Participatory democracy model emphasizes that equal rights are achieved through a participatory process where skilled members of society are profoundly involved in the governing process.

Frameworks of E-democracy models

Held's framework forms the background for a body of theoretical work which relates information and communication Technologies (ICT) to forms of political organisations, suggesting models of E-Democracy. Van Dijk [2000] abandons the obviously less relevant historical models, and analyses the role of ICT in relation to Held's four modern democracy models (Pluralist, Participatory, Legalist, and Competitive Democracy). He considers the models to be primarily characterised by:

1. whether the main goal of democracy is opinion forming or decision making, and

2. whether the primary means of democracy is the use of elected representatives, or direct voting by the people.

He describes four roles for ICT: allocation (one way distribution of information), consultation, registration (central collection of information including balloting) and conversation. He also adds a fifth model (Libertarian) which emphasizes 'autonomous politics by citizens in their own associations using the horizontal communication capabilities of the internet' (p.45).

A related, but simpler framework of four E-democracy models is introduced by Bellamy [2000]. Whereas Van Dijk discusses the role of ICT as a supplement to traditional communication mechanisms, Bellamy adds a post-Internet democracy model (Cyberdemocracy), where the Internet no longer represents a supplement to traditional communication channels, but emerges as a crucial pre-condition for democracy. Bellamy claims that her four models (Consumer, Demo-elitist, Neo-republican, and Cyberdemocratic) serve as

> 'Logically coherent constructs abstracted from specific social settings or from competing political values', seeking to 'ground electronic democracy in a set of rival discourses connecting democratic values to technological change' [Bellamy, 2000].

The Consumer model focuses on the role of citizens as consumers of public services, whilst accepting well-established features of democracy such as parliamentary institutions, elections and parties. The main democratic value is the legal right to services, and the model seeks to refocus democracy around the effective provision of these services: value for money. Demo-Elitist democracy also accepts traditional institutional features as the basis for democracy. The general public's main personal interests are assumed to lie outside 'high' politics, rather on services and economic prosperity. This lack of interest leads to the fact that political decision making is the responsibility of an elite of specialists and experts, whose task is to be mediators in conflicting interests and claims. Experts representing (or claiming to represent) differing interests in society act in extended policy networks, forming the elite which is

effectively involved in the formation of consensus, the articulation of policy and the defining of services.

Neo-Republican democracy focuses on the quality of citizen's participation and involvement. Citizens are expected to be active, especially at the micro- and local level, their citizenship contributing both to the emancipation of the political sphere and to their own moral, social, and intellectual development. The model is rooted in radical assumptions of common social rights and responsibilities, where the revitalizing of civic spirit is a central objective. The Cyber-Democratic model represents the most radical change to traditional democratic institutions and features. Traditional institutions lose power and influence in favour of network-based groups forging identities with alienated individuals defying barriers caused by society, and the nation states, cultural background and class. This virtual society of networks is dependent on the use of the self-organizing internet communities. In this post-modern vision (or nightmare) of extended pluralism escaping the bounds of cultural hegemony, yet struggling to retain social cohesion and collective political will, ICT is no longer a supplement to traditional communication channels, but a condition for democracy.

IV. An elaborated framework on E-Democracy

To simplify the comparison of the various democracy models mentioned above to fit our purposes, let us categorize them based on two fundamental characteristics defined in relation to any democratic process: inclusion in decisions and control of the agenda [Dahl, 1989]1. Inclusion refers to the idea of whether all adults which belong to society are able to participate in current debates and decision-making processes. One important discourse mentioned in the literature on democracy draws analytical lines between representative and direct democracies [Held, 1996, Lively, 1975, Van Dijk, 2000], where citizen-oriented initiatives to affect decisions are often linked to direct democracies.

Control of the agenda is related to the very issue of who decides what should be decided in the first place – especially whether the citizens are able to address issues and provide decisions themselves as the needs emerge. Democratic communication can be initiated by citizens [Rodan, 1998, Tsaliki, 2002], by external stakeholders like the traditional press [Fung, 2002], parties [Jensen, 2003], or by the government [Macintosh et al., 2005, Sæbø and Päivärinta, 2005]. By shifting from traditional democratic communication towards communicating by digital media, the visibility of who is in charge has become increasingly unclear. Different stakeholders do not always share assumptions on the purpose or mode of participation intended by those in charge of developing the communication systems [Sæbø

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[1] Although Dahl (1989) assumes that these characteristics should be present in any genuinely democratic process, we recognize the fact that e.g. in different forms of representational democracy varying levels of actual implementations of these ideals exist. Dahl summarizes altogether five criteria for "genuine" democratic societies and processes. In addition to the issues of who to include in the decisions and who are in charge of setting the agenda, he highlights the issues of effective and equal participation opportunities, voting equality, and the need for enlightened understanding of the citizens. However, unlike inclusion and control of agenda, we consider the latter three as absolute requirements for democracy whereas, in practice, more fundamental differences exist between different democracy models, making these two dimensions as meaningful to be analysed in more detail. That is, we argue that without the equal right to participate, the 'one person one vote' principle, and the possibility of being informed about the public matters in the first place, we cannot speak of true democracy, whereas there can be differences in democracies with regard to who are actually operationally making the decisions and controlling the agenda in practice. For example, the idea of representational democracy does not actually require citizens to be in charge of setting the agenda or deciding particular issues.

and Päivärinta, 2005, Rose and Sæbø, 2005]. Table 1 introduces four general-level, idealised democracy models based on these two main dimensions.

Citizens set the agenda	**Partisan E-Democracy**	**Direct E-Democracy**
Government (politicians and officers) set(s) the agenda	**Liberal E-Democracy**	**Deliberative E-Democracy**
	Citizens are implicitly included in decision-making processes	Citizens have an explicitly defined role in decision-making processes

Table 1. Models of E-democracy

Partisan Democracy

The need for a new model

The review unveiled some cases, where e-democracy was characterized by being independent of or in opposition to existing power structures. The impact is materialized mostly through general level pressure of visible "public opinion" [Fung, 2002, Schneider, 1996] or through elections [Moon and Yang, 2003]. None of the theoretical discussions on democracy models identified (see appendix 1) address such cases. Habermas' [1996] discussion on discursive deliberation partly address these issues, but his contribution is not to be considered as a democracy model, but an attempt to address important characteristics in every democratic society [Eriksen and Weigård, 1999]. Legitimising public action in an active communicative society focuses on how to achieve commitment through discourse representing diverging viewpoints [Habermas, 1996]. Existence of independent communication channels (not owned or directed by the government) is a prerequisite to achieve a rational discourse [Habermas, 1996]. Ideal democracies require equal opportunities for citizens to place questions on the agenda and to express reasons [Dahl, 1989]. Hence an important part of E-Democracy is communication uncontrolled by government and without clear connection to the decision-making process.

Characteristics

Partisan democracy initiatives are characterised by citizen-initiated participation and implicit citizen intervention in the decision-making process. Active citizens participate in the political debate, but not through traditional channels or solely through representatives. Information technology seeks to obtain visibility for alternative political expressions and criticism without interruptions from the political elite [Fung, 2002, Hurwitz, 1999, Moon and Yang, 2003, Olsson et al., 2003, Paolillo and Heald, 2002, Papacharissi, 2004, Rodan, 1998, Schneider, 1996, Stromer-Galley, 2002, Tsaliki, 2002]. Unrestricted discussions set the agenda. Examples include use of independent online communities discussing politics [Tsaliki, 2002], chat room discussions [Fung, 2002], Usenet discussions [Hill and Hughes, 1998, Schneider, 1996], and blogging [Griffiths, 2004, Macintosh et al., 2005].

The opportunity to be heard and to meet an audience can be considered important [Moon and

Yang, 2003, Paolillo and Heald, 2002, Stromer-Galley, 2002], even when the audience is scarce or absent [Hurwitz, 1999, Stromer-Galley, 2002, Tsaliki, 2002]. New voices in the political arena [Fung, 2002, Stromer-Galley, 2002] and empowered citizens expressing alternative ideologies [Fung, 2002, Papacharissi, 2004] might fortify the importance of Partisan democracy solutions, even when the connection to the prevailing decision-making processes remains implicit or absent.

Challenges

The missing distinct connection to the decision-making process is a challenge [Hurwitz, 1999, Paolillo and Heald, 2002, Schneider, 1996]. Online services not connected to the traditional political process [Papacharissi, 2004] can be naïvely regarded as a panacea that promotes meaningful debate [Tsaliki, 2002]. However, the meaning of such debate may be hard to discern when only a few participants post a considerable number of contributions [Rodan, 1998, Tsaliki, 2002], leaving the representative body confused [Schneider, 1996]. In addition, citizens seem to be more eager to contribute new posts than relating themselves to arguments of other participants [Paolillo and Heald, 2002] thus reducing the dynamic development of new arguments [Papacharissi, 2004, Stromer-Galley, 2002].

Beyond a South-Korean "success story" of partisan democracy that promoted oppositional viewpoints against a dominant government and mainstream media [Moon & Yang, 2003], the experimental solutions have only partially succeeded with emphasising alternative information [Hurwitz, 1999, Tsaliki, 2002], and, to a much lesser extent, in bringing in a new audience [Olsson et al., 2003, Tsaliki, 2002]. Missing audience has resulted in a lack of reflexivity [Olsson et al., 2003] and the inability to bring some arguments forward [Tsaliki, 2002]. Hence support of the public sphere may be a more evasive target [Schneider, 1996]. Individual users may dominate the debate without building a common consensus that is valuable to society [Hurwitz, 1999].

As the roles of communicators in typically anonymous partisan e-democracy solutions are not explicitly stated, creation of common consensus and opinions can become challenging. Participants supporting the existing regime may be hiding behind artificial roles [Rodan, 1998], and "professional writers" may advocate the official view, fighting against the engagement of the common citizen [Fung, 2002]. The professionals can also co-ordinate their arguments, making it even harder for ordinary people to argue back [Fung, 2002].

Liberal Democracy

Characteristics

The government-based agenda for decision-making and implicit citizen participation in the decision-making process outside elections characterises Liberal Democracy. This category includes several previously defined democracy models and concepts. Liberal democracy in general is characterised by a representative government, where citizens form the electorate, giving mandates to representatives at the local level but also participating in the public debate [Held, 1996]. The purpose of politics is to re-concile conflicting interests, and politicians are responsible for mediating these conflicts as they occur, through negotiation [Eriksen and Weigård, 1999]. In Liberal Democracy, the majority rule protects individuals from random government. Effective political leadership is underpinned by liberal principles such as minimum state intervention in civil society and respect for individual privacy [Held, 1996, Van Dijk, 2000].

Liberal democracy forms an extensive part of the reported projects. The main emphasis ranges among several issues: from how to involve young people in the development [Detlor and Finn, 2002, Finn and Detlor, 2002], characteristics of the participators [Marcella et al., 2002, Weber et al., 2003], factors influencing use and adoption [Johnson and Kaye, 2003, Weare et al., 1999], how governmental services influence power structures [La Porte et al., 2002], characteristics of success stories [Jensen, 2003], characteristics of design [Ward and Gibson, 2003], and issues of online communication [Rose and Sæbø, 2005]. The objectives for such services vary. Citizens may be asked to submit suggestions to the public authorities [Aidemark, 2003], dialogue may be initiated for the purpose of teaching inhabitants how to become e-citizens [Biasiotti and Nannucci, 2004], or citizens can be given the opportunity to communicate with representatives and government officials [Nugent, 2001].

Challenges

Finn and Detlor [2002] experienced discrepancies between user requirements and government standards. Poor design – e.g. restricted opportunity to do searches, the absence of site maps, and out-dated information [Cullen and Houghton, 2000] – were found to decrease participation. Absence of interactivity makes websites static, hence they have no influence on election results and turnout [Ward and Gibson, 2003]. Limited audience, unstable technology, and expenses limit the opportunity to develop high quality solutions [Ward and Gibson, 2003]. Politician's lack of knowledge makes it difficult to use the new technology [Ward and Gibson, 2003]. The workload for different stakeholders has to be limited since new systems often develop on top of traditional systems [Ho and Ni, 2004].

Deliberative Democracy

Characteristics

The ideal of Deliberative Democracy connects citizens more explicitly and directly to decision- making processes [Held, 1996, Pateman, 1970] and emphasizes the role of open discussions in a well functioning public sphere [Gimmler, 2001]. Politicians and citizens share an interest in dialogue and discourse leading to the formation of political opinion. Still, as it is a form of representative democracy, the input and cooperation between citizens and politicians constitute the legalisation of display of power. In relation to Deliberative Democracy, several ideas and concepts have been suggested. The concepts of Participative [Held, 1996, Pateman, 1970, Van Dijk, 2000], Protective, and Developmental Democracies [Held, 1996] emphasise the achievement of equal rights and a balance of power that can only be accomplished in a participatory society. The importance of citizen participation and involvement are emphasised further in the concepts of Neo-republican and Plebiscitary democracy [Bellamy, 2000, Van Dijk, 2000]. Information technologies are developed with the purpose of increasing citizen participation and involvement in political decision-making beyond casting their vote in elections or participating in electoral campaigns [Biasiotti and Nannucci, 2004, Chadwick and May, 2003, Ferber et al., 2003, Hagemann, 2002, Musso et al., 2000, Myles, 2004, Nugent, 2001, Olsson et al., 2003, Ranerup, 2000, Steyaert, 2000].

Initial evidence from in-depth case studies indicates that truly Deliberative E-Democracy implementations, with explicitly defined relationships to the actual decision-making processes, may increase the level of citizen participation, if compared to traditional means of political discussion between citizens and decision-makers. Stanley & Weare [2004] show that an increased number of citizens and new citizen groups became involved when a governmental organization developed web-based E-Docket service. Grönlund [2003] reports more than one thousand inputs in a municipal system developed for the purpose of discussing

the municipal development plan in Kalix, a small Swedish municipality. The "Ur'say" youth parliament in Scotland encouraged young people to participate in political discussions, in which the government representatives indeed take their input into consideration, and subsequently provide feedback on how this input affected their decisions [Macintosh et al., 2003].

Challenges

The digital divide between competent and less competent users of IT [Olsson et al., 2003], and the fact that only those already involved in traditional democratic practices tend to participate in E-Democracy [Scheufele and Nisbet, 2002], challenge the ideas of Deliberative Democracy. The general-level resistance of change in governmental and political decision-making structures [Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000, Nugent, 2001] challenges development of Deliberative Democracy as well, along with the administrative focus on resource distribution for managerial e-government issues instead of promoting new forms of democracy [Chadwick and May, 2003]. Research on usage [Scheufele and Nisbet, 2002] and service production on the Internet at the governmental [Chadwick and May, 2003] and state [Ferber et al., 2003] levels of administration has suggested a lack of interest in actual implementations of the Deliberative democracy model, with similar observations concerning municipal websites [Musso et al., 2000, Myles, 2004] and party organizations [Gibson and Ward, 2002, Hagemann, 2002, Heidar and Saglie, 2003, Hoff et al., 2003].

Based on their experience from E-Democracy projects, some researchers conclude that any particular communication infrastructure, such as "the Internet", does not per se "promote" Deliberative Democracy without human-initiated policies for the use of technology for such purposes [Masters et al., 2004, Sæbø and Päivärinta, 2005]. However, a great proportion of experimental E-Democracy solutions remains disconnected from the decision-making process [Heidar and Saglie, 2003, Hoff et al., 2003, Myles, 2004, Tambouris and Gorilas, 2003]. Although politicians and decision-makers support E-Democracy experimentation, their enthusiasm might decrease when it becomes evident that the new means of communication changes existing power structures [Grönlund, 2003, Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000]. Consequently, Grönlund [2003] suggests that the supporters of Deliberative Democracy should have an intentional strategy to overcome possible reluctance of individuals to maintain the "managerial" (i.e. the Liberal) democracy model.

Direct Democracy

Characteristics

The Direct democracy model represents a radical alternative to the representative models of democracy. In Direct Democracy, network-based groups and individuals take over the role of traditional institutions [Bellamy, 2000, Held, 1996, Lynne, 2004]. The idea of citizens participating directly in political decision-making originates from the classical Athenian ideas of democracy and participation in the polis-state, focusing on equal rights to rule and be ruled in turn by the collective of free male citizens [Held, 1996]. Direct Democracy focuses on how traditional institutions lose power in favour of network-based groups or individuals [Bellamy, 2000, Held, 1996, Lynne, 2004]. ICT plays a critical role in implementations where the Internet no longer represents a supplement to traditional communication channels, but instead a crucial precondition for democracy [Bellamy, 2000]. A direct E-Democracy initiative requires communication technology to support coordination among a great number of decision-makers, i.e. citizens, possibly geographically scattered, with diverse interests and backgrounds.

Missing implementations of direct democracy

Direct (cyber) democracy has been suggested as an ideal form of E-Democracy in a few theoretical sources [Bellamy, 2000, Lynne, 2004, Van Dijk, 2000]. Despite optimistic theorizing, the actual implementations of direct E-Democracy have remained rare [Aidemark, 2003, Heidar and Saglie, 2003, Myles, 2004, Netchaeva, 2002]. So far, we found no academic literature concerning experiences from direct E-Democracy systems. However, at the level of local/municipal politics, examples of direct E-Democracy have started to emerge in the form of new www- (or Internet-) parties, e.g. in Sweden [Aidemark, 2003, Sæbø and Päivärinta, 2005]. This development seems to emerge especially due to new actors and citizen movements enriching the map of political parties, as the traditional party organizations seem to stick to their representational practices despite several trials of new communication media, e.g. in Norway [Heidar and Saglie, 2003] and Denmark [Hoff et al., 2003].

We were able to find two Swedish Internet-parties, Demoex (www.demoex.net) and Knivsta.nu (www.knivsta.nu), which have an explicit policy of involving the ideal of Direct Democracy in their internal decision-making processes. These parties also gained representatives, 1 and 4, respectively, to use political power in the municipal boards (in Vallentuna and Knivsta). Especially, the www-based communication tools are used as part of the decision-making process and actions taken by the party and its representatives. Explicitly defined communication systems affect the behaviour of the party representatives in the city council meetings and decision-making in Direct party democracy à la Demoex and Knivsta.nu. The representatives commit themselves to vote in agreement with the internal online voting results of the party, not according to their own wishes. Hence, the issue of identifying the user on the Web becomes an important prerequisite.

Summary of the review

Table 2 presents the connection between our suggested framework, current literature on democracy models, and reported implementations on E-Democracy cases.

	Partisan Democracy	Direct Democracy
democracy models	No examples identified	**Classical** (Held, 1996), **Direct** (Held, 1996; Lynne, 2004), **Cyber** (Bellamy, 2000), **Libertarian** (Van Dijk, 2000), **Quick** (Aaström, 2001)
Reported cases	**Usenet discussions**(Hill & Hughes, 1998; Paolillo & Heald, 2002; Schneider, 1996), **Discussion forums** (Fung, 2002; Moon & Yang, 2003), **Network-based activities** (Hurwitz, 1999), **Policy study among citizens** (Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003), **Discussion groups** (Papacharissi, 2004), **Political control** (Rodan, 1998), **Political talk** (Stromer-Galley, 2002), **Online forums** (Tsaliki, 2002), **Blogging** (Griffiths, 2004; Macintosh, McKay-Hubbard, & Shell, 2005)	No academic references identified, only few implementations; mainly Internet-parties.
	Liberal democracy	Deliberative democracy
democracy models	**Liberal/developmental** (Held, 1996), **Aggregative** (Eriksen & Weigård, 1999), **Pluralism** (Held, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000), **Competitive** (Held, 1996), **Demo elitist** (Bellamy, 2000), **Legalist**(Held, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000), **Consumer** (Bellamy, 2000), **Thin** (Aaström, 2001)	**Participatory** (Held, 1996; Pateman, 1970; Van Dijk, 2000), **Neo-Republican** (Bellamy, 2000), **Plebiscitary** (Van Dijk, 2000), **Deliberative** (Gimmler, 2001), **Strong** (Barber, 1984; Aaström, 2001)
Reported cases	**Discussion forum** (Jensen, 2003; Ranerup, 2000; Rose & Sæbø, 2005), **Governmental web sites** (Cullen & Houghton, 2000; Weare, Musso, & Hale, 1999), **County web site** (Ho & Ni, 2004), **Internet's potential** (Krueger, 2002), **Bureaucracies' role** (La Porte, Demchak, & de Jong, 2002) **Web system for parliaments** (Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002), **Stages of e-government growth** (Reddick, 2004), **Candidate web sites** (Ward & Gibson, 2003), **Citizens as participators** (Weber, Loumakis, & Bergman, 2003), **Involvement of youth** (Detlor & Finn, 2002; Finn & Detlor, 2002), **Dialogue system** (Aidemark, 2003; Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Nugent, 2001), **Design quality** (Cullen & Houghton, 2000)	**Dockets** (Stanley & Weare, 2004), **Discussion forum** (Grönlund, 2003), **E-citizens** (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004), **Interaction between states and citizens** (Chadwick & May, 2003), **State websites** (Ferber, Foltz, & Pugliese, 2003), **Discussion lists** (Hagemann, 2002), **Local web** (Musso, Weare, & Hale, 2000), **Net development** (Myles, 2004), **Dialogue system** (Nugent, 2001), **Discussion forum** (Päivärinta & Sæbø, 2005a; Ranerup, 2000; Rose & Sæbø, 2005), **Policy study** (Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003), **Online citizens** (Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002; Steyaert, 2000), **Interactive decision making** (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000), **Parties** (Heidar & Saglie, 2003), **Decision making** (Groper, 1996), **Deliberation** (Aidemark, 2003; Carvalho, Rocha, & Oliveira, 2003; Grönlund, 2003), **Involving youth** (Macintosh, Robson, Smith, & Whyte, 2003; Masters, Macintosh, & Smith, 2004)

Table 2. Summary of the review of E-Democracy

V. Example: Analysing discussion forums

To illustrate the explanatory potential of this framework we conduct an analysis of different discussion forums related to the suggested models of E-Democracy.

Discussion forums for Partisan Democracy

Many discussion forums have been set up by stakeholders not directly linked to existing political or decision-making structures in the society. The political Usenet discussion newsgroups [Hill and Hughes, 1998, Paolillo and Heald, 2002, Schneider, 1996] probably represent the first examples. In a few cases, web-based discussion forums have emerged as a channel for opposition groups in certain countries where conventional media dominates political discourse to express themselves. Examples include the newspaper-owned discussion forum, singtao.com in Hong Kong [Fung, 2002], and a discussion forum owned by the opposition's presidential candidate supporters, "Rohsamo," in South Korea [Moon and Yang, 2003].

Opposition to or independence from existing power structures is common in these examples. The impact of such discussion forums materializes mostly through pressure of visible public opinion [Fung, 2002, Schneider, 1996], but is sometimes also connected to elections [Moon and Yang, 2003]. After the success of "Rohsamo" in the South Korean presidential campaign of 2002, which promoted an oppressed oppositional movement to a main player in the representative democracy, few reports indicate a visible impact of such discussion forums and related E-Democracy systems. However, the existence of a public sphere alongside one-sided official truths of totalitarian or semi-totalitarian societies may already represent an indirect voice in decision-making. Fung's [2002] observations on professional pro-government writers indicate that in some cases the governmental forces cannot plainly ignore the "voice" of such forums.

Discussion forums for Liberal Democracy

Jensen [2003] describes a Danish experiment, Nordpol.dk, in which a county arranged a web-based discussion forum as a part of their digital services in connection with local elections. Nordpol.dk had no explicit connection with actual decision-making processes concerning the municipality, and the rationale for its implementation was strictly informative. There, the candidates tried to inform citizens about their arguments whereas the citizens tried to lobby for issues that seemed of significantly less importance to the candidates. Hence, Nordpol.dk represents the Liberal model, in which communication takes place mainly in connection with elections. The authorities define the purposes for communication beforehand and shape and control the debate (although moderately in this case). The dialogue's sole purpose before elections is to inform the citizens of the candidates' viewpoints and vice versa.

Ranerup [2002] and Rose and Sæbø [2005] describe almost identical cases in Swedish and Norwegian contexts: municipality-owned discussion forums of local issues within categories defined in advance. Ranerup [2002] denotes the need for politicians to participate in electronic discussion forums in order to facilitate their use. Rose and Sæbø [2005] describe a Norwegian case in which politicians and citizens were involved in a discussion forum during the elections and shortly after. They noted obvious differences between the assumptions of citizens vs. politicians regarding which democracy model should be pursued. Whereas most politicians used the forum to inform and be informed, a great number of citizens would like the forum to develop into a more Deliberative (or "neo-republican) form, in which the citizens and their representatives could continuously inform and be informed [Rose and Sæbø, 2005].

Discussion forums for Deliberative Democracy

Discussion forums involve citizens in the formation of public opinion. For example, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) in the U.S. used a web-based docket, together with a discussion forum, to gather citizen opinions about a long-term strategy for improving commercial motor vehicle, operator, and carrier safety [Stanley and Weare, 2004]. A Swedish municipality, Kalix, introduced a web site that included a discussion forum was used for debating targeted public matters as well as citizen influence on the city planning [Grönlund, 2003].

Such consultations via a discussion forum represent Deliberative democracy, where the politicians and officials are continually sensitive to the opinions from the field. Still, politicians and governmental organs remain responsible for initiating and defining the actual topics discussed. The difference between the general-level debate and the targeted efforts to use discussion forums resides in the fact that here the citizens have a good reason to expect their voices to be heard concerning a particular matter. That is, the relationship between communication through the discussion forum and the actual decision-making processes here appears as explicit (or, at least, more explicit) compared to the discussion forums described in [Jensen, 2003, Ranerup, 2000, Rose and Sæbø, 2005].

Discussion forums for Direct Democracy

In Knivsta, Sweden (http://www.knivsta.nu/), a newly established local party (knivsta.nu) uses a forum for discussion and decision-making as an important part of the party organization. The party got 11.5% of the votes in the local elections in 2003 and 4 representatives in the municipal council. The Internet-party in Knivsta explicitly seeks to "complement the representational democracy with Direct democracy" at a party level. The democracy idea (www.knivsta.nu) explicitly states that the representatives will not only act on their own viewpoints, but in accordance with the informed viewpoints from the citizens / members. The discussion forum and occasional e-voting play an important role in this process. In the www-site of the party it remains slightly implicit whether and how the discussions truly affect the representatives' behaviour in the municipality council. Still, the discussion forum and occasional e-voting represent a direct channel to affect the representatives of this party, as they are active with regard to the site and the discussion forums. Together with other solutions, such as e-mail lists and e-voting mechanisms, such use of discussion forums approaches Direct Democracy, where the citizens online affect the decisions made.

Summary of the analysis

The explanatory potential of the four idealised democracy models can be illustrated by a summary of the discussion forums (Table 3). By looking at the main purposes of discussion forums for different democracy models we illustrate how the framework can be used to identify differences in how a particular technology may work under different conditions (democracy models).

	Partisan Democracy	**Direct Democracy**
Citizens set the agenda	Discussion forums are channels for expressing opinions by citizen groups often criticizing existing power structures. No explicit connection to existing governmental or political decision-making processes is defined beforehand. Citizens set the agenda for public discussion but not for decision-making. ICT seeks to obtain visibility for alternative political expressions uninterrupted by political elite.	Discussion forums represent a direct channel to raise issues and affect decisions. The citizens are online affecting the decisions to be made (mostly at the local level). Citizens set the agenda both for public discussion and decision-making. ICT is a crucial pre-condition for democracy to support coordination among decision makers.
	Liberal Democracy	**Deliberative Democracy**
Government (politicians and officers) set(s) the agenda	The candidates inform citizens about their arguments whereas the citizens try to lobby the candidates. The purposes of communication are defined beforehand by the authorities, The democracy is regarded as occurring after the citizens have been informed about the candidate viewpoints, and vice versa, before the elections, and about the decisions made in between. ICT seeks to improve the amount and quality of information exchange between government and citizens.	Discussion forums used for targeted purposes actually involving citizens in public decision-making processes. The politicians and officials are continually sensitive to the opinions from the field. The citizens have a good reason to expect that their voices are heard concerning a particular matter initiated by the government. ICT is developed for increased citizen participation and involvement in decision-making processes.
	Citizens mainly implicitly included in decision-making processes	Citizens have an explicitly defined role in decision-making processes

Table 3. Analyses of Discussion Forums in Light of the Framework

VI. Discussion

In this section we first address the need for the Partisan model. Secondly, we address the opportunity to unify ideals from different models so they remain dynamic over time and discuss the suggested framework's use and usefulness. We discuss also the practical implications and limitations of this research.

Partisan democracy model

The review showed a gap between the reported cases and the theoretical discussions on various democracy models. Under the Partisan E-democracy model, the main challenge is to create a movement which would involve the audience and facilitate evolution of emerging arguments. Partisan E-Democracy implementations have the greatest influence in situations where alternative arenas for expressing political viewpoints are absent or difficult to access. Citizen participation can be increased both by addressing a common objective and also by addressing the existence of contradictory views in the political debate and cultivating such

contradictions to crystallize the standpoints of the participants. Any implementation of Partisan E-Democracy should facilitate free and independent debate. Third party opportunities to monitor and flame the discussions need to be carefully scrutinized and balanced to maintain the credibility of such arenas.

In the field of Partisan E-Democracy, a few popular arenas are already implemented in the context of also other dimensions of human life, making E-Democracy a part of people's everyday communication space instead of introducing stand-alone solutions to be specifically accessed. For example, the Usenet attracts people to discuss any matter under the sun and the Singtao forum [Fung, 2002] is run by a commercial newspaper, which includes other news and information services.

Combination of different models

The analyses of reported system implementations identify a lack of examples of direct E-Democracy. Although an extensive theoretical discussion about direct E-Democracy is identified, our review calls for more empirical research. On the other hand, direct E-Democracy should by no means be expected to represent the ultimate end-result of E-Democracy projects as suggested in theory, since the majority of implementations support less radical democracy models.

In fact, in a democratic society, solutions that would support all four E-democracy models simultaneously should perhaps exist. The parallel existence of all the models may be necessary to ensure a dynamic balance between a democratic development process and the practical governance of public matters. For example, without any operational decision-making by politicians and officers (Liberal E-Democracy), inefficient governance will appear since all citizens cannot practically express their opinions on each matter or receive an overview of the consequences of their decisions. Increasing attention to Deliberative E-Democracy would make the representatives more accountable for their decisions between election periods, concerning matters of wide public interest. Without any means for Partisan E-Democracy, new or minority viewpoints might remain unexpressed. Finally, new technologies would make it increasingly possible for each citizen to participate in actual decision-making (Direct Democracy). Whether this is largely desirable should be thoroughly scrutinized, as some political theorists hold that citizens are not always capable of deciding their own good. In light of our framework, however, any stakeholder of E-Democracy could now identify the purposes and value assumptions beneath a particular solution more explicitly.

Use and usefulness of the suggested framework

Our framework of the four democracy models represents a means for seeing E-Democracy technologies and development of the society as a mutually dependent and dynamically emergent phenomenon. Hence, we subscribe to an established line of IS theorizing that, in general, warns against viewing any application of IT as a deterministic tool, orientating instead towards analysis of structural processes in which technologies and organization contexts (and, in this case, societies) develop in an interwoven manner [Markus and Robey, 1988, Orlikowski, 1992, Orlikowski and Iacono, 2001]. Our analysis of discussion forums in light of the four democracy models addresses this issue: the need to discuss societal values and ambitions in connection with the development and use of a particular technology in a particular democratic context instead of seeing technology – let alone democracy – as a generic "black box." A particular communication medium can be effective in more than one particular model of E-Democracy. Use of the framework to analyse particular implementations can reveal the democratic ideas beneath the surface, and address particular

ways to use a technology according to the pursued democracy model. Hence, we believe that the framework adds value to structural analysis and understanding of IT use [Orlikowski, 1992] in the field of E-Democracy.

Following this theoretical argumentation, we can now use the framework to criticize research designs and phrasings that generally study, for example, "the impact of the Internet," or other particular factors of technology to "democracy" or "citizen participation/mobilization" without specifying the democracy model pursued [Gibson and Ward, 2002, Scheufele and Nisbet, 2002, Weber et al., 2003]. Hence we address some of the voices sceptical about E-Democracy in general, such as Scheufele and Nisbet [2002] who draw conclusions based on Deliberative ideals, still studying only particular E-Democracy implementations within the Liberal model, without taking into account that the Liberal political ideology does not promote the adoption of Deliberative E-democracy [Weare et al., 1999] in the first place. That is, critique on the potential of Deliberative E-Democracy in light of an analysis of implementations of Liberal E-Democracy seems not particularly convincing. By using our framework to make distinctions among the particular values behind particular E-Democracy solutions from the beginning, a critique could be better focused and crystallized. For future empirical research on "the impact of Internet" or "enhancing citizen participation by E-Democracy" we will argue that the democracy ideals and particular IT applications included in any study need to be specified explicitly, before drawing general-level conclusions about those issues.

Empirical research on E-Democracy has focused mainly on Liberal democracy, transformed or revised for the web. However, an increasing number of reports on E-Democracy applications for Partisan Democracy and Deliberative Democracy emerge. The implementations of Direct E-Democracy are still in their infancy. Only few pioneering experiments of minor political importance have started to emerge. In fact, it is said that the Liberal model of democracy generally discourages experimentation on new forms of E-Democracy [Weare et al., 1999]. Hence, our review indicates that the new forms of E-Democracy should be researched with proactive research methodologies in particular contexts, such as in innovative party organizations and citizen movements, instead of drawing hasty conclusions about the potential of new E-democracy models based on surveys of the current popularity of dominating E-Democracy implementations.

We suggest that research strategies, such as design research and action research, [Hevner et al., 2004, Lindgren et al., 2004] could be applied more systematically in order to report experiences from different contexts and thus accumulate knowledge in the field. Design research for E-Democracy can apply to existing knowledge, suggesting and experimenting with new solutions and media for a particular model of E-Democracy. Action research initiatives could adopt suggested implementations to real-life pilot environments and collect further experience in collaboration between researchers and practitioners. Although such co-operation has been launched in a few areas where the academics have suggested solutions for E-Democracy, e.g. in Scotland [Macintosh et al., 2005, Macintosh et al., 2003, Macintosh and Smith, 2002], few researchers in the field still consciously apply the principles of design research and action research. Experiences are reported more vaguely in "case studies," plainly describing what has been done without rigorous connection to previous experiences or theory on the field.

Implications for practice

From the practical viewpoint, our review indicates that E-democracy implementations need to be holistically considered from the viewpoint of the political and decision-making context as a part of the larger issue of democratization in society, not as a target for development in itself. Unless new communication practices are made official, let alone recognized, by the key stakeholders such as politicians and citizens, the development may have little impact. Traditional communication channels and E-Democracy will continue to exist side by side. So far, an incredibly high number of E-Democracy applications have been left without explicit connection to the traditional democratic communication and decision-making processes.

Practitioners should be also aware that the different stakeholders of E-Democracy may actually have different ideas and ideals of democracy, which may affect the use of certain E-Democracy applications. In light of the framework, these differences could be taken into account by the practitioners who may want to choose to promote a certain kind of E-Democracy. Based on the suggested framework, any implementation of E-Democracy can be specific about the actual democracy model pursued in a particular initiative.

Limitations

Concerns about the validity of our conclusions can be raised. First, there is the question of overlooking research relevant to our conclusions which was not indexed in search engines or captured by our iterative collection of research reports. For example, we have restricted our review to English-language outlets, which may reduce the diversity of topics and the coverage of the geographical areas studied. One should be careful in this regard to view our collection of the literal sources as a holistic representation of the whole E-Democracy field. Second, the research methods in the selected literature varied, which provided challenges to comparison when the findings were aggregated. Third, academic rigour of the reviewed papers was less emphasized in our selection of the sources (except for the rejection of articles without references to other research. By including items such as conference proceedings the quality of the selected articles may vary greatly. When choosing between better quality (by only investigating journal articles and book chapters from prestigious publishers) or greater quantity of contributions (by including conference proceedings) the latter was selected. However, in this young field the number of contributions published in good quality journals is still limited, making a review restricted to this literature difficult. Within these limits we still believe that our review results in a constructive basis for the current state of the field, contributing to the theoretical means of analysing IT use in the field of E-democracy, accumulating findings, and pointing to implications for research and practice.

All in all, we argue that our framework provides an integrated basis for research efforts to understand IT use for E-Democracy. Experience from further E-Democracy cases can now be reported in relation to particular democracy ideals present in the context of the implementation. However, more efforts need to be directed at building up a dynamic experience base to discuss the particular E-Democracy genres further. Our analysis of discussion forums illustrates how one technology works differently, addressing a need to explain the differences. Particular communication patterns and their combinations in particular E-democracy contexts should be scrutinized in more detail in order to discover more detailed lessons in the implementation of particular democracy models. Moreover, experiences related to the development processes and promotion of E-Democracy should be more systematically collected and reported.

VII. Conclusion

We introduced a framework for E-Democracy which integrates theoretical and empirical literature in the field. In the framework the idea of Partisan Democracy contributes to the previous frameworks of E-Democracy. Our contribution responds to the call for more theory-building in the field [Andersen and Henriksen, 2005, Grönlund, 2004]. Empirical research on E-Democracy is a scattered field of experiments lacking solid theoretical foundations, let alone cumulative knowledge that would guide research and practice forward. Our review shows how studies of IT use for E-democracy can be categorised to collect such knowledge. Attempts towards Liberal, Deliberative, and Partisan E-Democracy were more or less represented in the empirical academic literature. Despite the theoretical urge for Direct E-Democracy, examples of real-life applications were practically absent in the academic literature. Some pioneering examples could, however, be found from the practice. On the other hand, the Partisan model of E-Democracy was rarely discussed in the theoretical literature.

Our main argument addresses the need to be specific about the actual democracy model to be pursued in connection with IT uses for E-Democracy. It makes little sense to discuss any particular medium or technology of E-Democracy in general, unless the actual democratic ideals and particular communication forms and purposes supporting those ideals are explicitly defined in context. For future empirical research, we argue that the democracy ideals should be explicitly stated in analysis of IT use for democratic communication and decision-making.

We suggest further efforts to collect knowledge on E-democracy in proactive research tightly connected to practice, in which particular technologies could be tested under explicitly stated democracy models; especially in connection to hitherto less proven Direct Democracy, but perhaps also in connection to varying opportunities to operationalise the Deliberative and Partisan models of democracy. As new communication technologies and people's communication preferences are constantly evolving, the importance of such work will not decrease in the foreseeable future. Our framework provides a general-level framework for categorizing such knowledge and helps explain differences in IT use under different democratic ideals.

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Editor's Note: The following reference list contains hyperlinks to World Wide Web pages. Readers who have the ability to access the Web directly from their word processor or are reading the paper on the Web, can gain direct access to these linked references. Readers are warned, however, that
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Appendix I. E-democracy models in relation to previous literature

	democracy models	Main characteristics
Liberal E-Democracy	Liberal and developmental democracy (Held, 1996)	Representative government where citizens are involved via voting, as representatives at the local level and participants in public debate.
	Aggregative democracy (Eriksen & Weigård, 1999),	Politics is a fight between conflicting individual interests. Politicians are responsible for aggregating elector interests as they occur via elections.
	Pluralism democracy (Held, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000)	Competitive electoral system with at least two parties secures government by minorities and political liberty. Citizens have the right to express their ideas, vote and organise.
	Competitive Elitist democracy (Held, 1996)/ Demo elitist democracy (Bellamy, 2000)	Elected parliaments are the basis for the democracy. Experts representing (or claiming to represent) different interests in society act in policy networks. These political experts represent the elite, which are intensively involved in the formation of policy and definition of the public services.
	Legalist democracy (Held, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000)	The majority principle protects individuals from arbitrary governments. Effective political leadership is guided by Liberal principles, and there is a minimum state intervention in civil society and private life.
	Consumer democracy (Bellamy, 2000), Thin democracy (Barber, 1984; Åström, 2001)	The main democratic value resides in the citizen's right to service. The model seeks to re-focus democracy around the efficient provision of public services. Competent consumers need to be well-informed; implying an important role for information and communication systems through which politicians inform citizens.
Deliberative E-Democracy	Participatory democracy (Held, 1996; Pateman, 1970; Van Dijk, 2000)	Equal rights can only be achieved in a participatory society which fosters a sense of political efficacy. A knowledgeable citizenry is capable of taking sustained interest in the governing process. Less power to bureaucracy in favour of more involvement by the citizens.
	Neo-Republican democracy (Bellamy, 2000) / Plebiscitary democracy (Van Dijk, 2000)	Citizens are regarded as active, especially at micro- and local levels. The model has radical assumptions on shared social rights and responsibilities, where revitalization of civic spirit is a central objective. ICT facilitates an increased number of participants, high-quality discussion and social inclusion in decision-making.
	Deliberative democracy (Gimmler, 2001), Strong democracy (Barber, 1984; Åström, 2001)	Highlights the role of open discussion, the importance of citizen participation, and the existence of a well-functioning public sphere.
Partisan E-Democracy		No theoretical contributions identified.
Direct E-Democracy	Classical democracy (Held, 1996)	Citizens had political equality and were free to rule and be ruled in turn. Main decisions were made by all in the assembly with sovereign power. Citizens were admitted to participate in politics focusing on society, not individuals.
	Direct democracy (Held, 1996; Lynne, 2004)/ Cyberdemocracy (Bellamy, 2000)	A radical alternative compared to the traditional democratic institutions and features. Traditional institutions lose power in favour of network-based groups and individuals. ICT no longer represents a supplement to traditional communication channels, emerging as a crucial pre-condition for democracy.
	Libertarian democracy (Van Dijk, 2000), Quick democracy (Barber, 1984; Åström, 2001)	Emphasises the autonomous politics by citizens in their own associations using the horizontal communication capabilities of ICT. Traditional institutions are, in the most extreme application, put aside by politics created in networks.

Defining the "E" in E-Democracy: a genre lens on IT artefacts

Øystein Sæbø and Tero Päivärinta

Abstract:
The field of e-Democracy has suffered from fuzzy conceptualizations about the actual role of ICT in the field. That is, the contribution of "e" in e-Democracy has been difficult to justify. To address the role of ICT in e-Democracy projects we contribute theoretically by combining knowledge on IT artefacts, genres and E-democracy models to be able to explore ICT in its embedded surroundings. IT artefacts can be seen as technology embedded by tasks, structures and contexts. We argue that the genre perspective of organizational communication, characterized by substance and form (focusing on tasks and structures) combined with E-democracy models (focusing on contexts) can help to understand the link between the technology and the embedded surroundings. To illustrate the explanatory potential of the suggested approach, genres for different E-democracy models are identified from empirical research reports of E-Democracy initiatives.

Introduction

Despite increasing interest and emerging conceptual ideas, research on actual contributions of E-Democracy to modern democracy is still in its infancy and the need for empirical studies and subsequent theory-building in the field has been addressed (Andersen & Henriksen, 2005; Grönlund, 2004). Many initiatives have proved to be rather vague in relation to the democracy model or specific aims pursued, and mixed expectations among citizens and politicians on E-Democracy have been reported (Rose & Sæbø, 2005).

The absence of connection between technology and democracy is given as one explanation on the often modest impact reported E-Democracy initiatives have on public participation (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003). ICT is often simplistically coupled to Direct Democracy, ignoring the need to be more specific on democracy to understand in detail how ICT influence democracy (Bellamy & Taylor, 1998; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000). Løfgren (2000) state that "We seldom find consideration on the way which the use of new technology might affect democracy" (p 57). This is supported by Schmidtke (1998) who identified the missing discussion on the impact ICT holds on processes for democratic decision making as a major obstacle for succeeding in E-Democracy projects. Hoff et al. add a similar conclusion in their investigation on Danish political parties: "Political parties appear to have entered the world of new technology without any predefined or explicit strategy concerning the ways in which the use of new technology might effect democracy" (Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000). According to Aidemark (2003, p. 323) "the important lesson is that there is no simple connection between the problems of democracy and the IT-based systems that are supposed to be supportive. It is the intention and strategies behind the democratic processes that are important". There is a need to build a theoretical and empirical base to better understand the link between technology and politics (Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002) since the connection is poorly understood (Moon & Yang, 2003). In particular the connection between ICT and new media in E-Democracy projects needs to be addressed more in detail (Smith, 2000; Steyaert, 2000).

To address the link between ICT and democracy we bridge knowledge on IT artefacts, genre of communication and the E-democracy models. We argue that the genre perspective can help conceptualise dimensions on the IT artefact on technology (form), task and structure (substance), and that the E-democracy models addresses the context the technology is embedded in. To illustrate the explanatory potential of the suggested approach, genres for different E-democracy models are identified from research contributions on E-Democracy initiatives.

In next section our theoretical approach is introduced. Then the approach is explored by conducting a literature review on reported E-Democracy Genres. Finally we discuss the suggested approach and contributions added in this paper.

Genre Lens to the IT Artefact

Genre theory has been used in ICT -related research since the early 1990s (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). In a review of genre theory in the field of information systems (IS), Firth and Lawrence (2003) argue how the idea of genre analysis has contributed to the identity of the IS field in general, facilitating our understanding of the core issues (Benbasat & Zmud, 2003) central to the IS discipline, such as practice of implementing IT artefacts, human behaviours in development and use of IT artefacts, and analysis of IT

impacts on humans and organizations. We continue this line of argumentation and discuss further how the IT artefact can be conceptualized through the genre lens. We use the field of e-Democracy as an example to illustrate the argument, especially as it represents a young field of research in which the contribution of new technologies has remained fuzzy (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003; Nugent, 2001; Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming).

E-democracy models

democracy models represent a common way of characterizing different forms of democracy. Literature on democracy models (Held, 1996; Lively, 1975; Van Dijk, 2000) uses varying characteristics in order to clarify differences among democracy ideas, making a detailed comparison of the competing models difficult. A review of this literature conducted by Päivärinta and Sæbø (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming) suggest a simplified comparison of various E-democracy models (table I) based on two fundamental characteristics: inclusion in decisions and control of the agenda (Dahl, 1989).

	Partisan E-Democracy	**Direct E-Democracy**
Citizens set the agenda	Citizens express bottom-up opinions and critique on existing power structures. No explicit connection to the existing governmental or political decision-making processes is defined beforehand. Citizens set the agenda for public discussions, but not for decision-making. ICT seeks to obtain visibility for alternative political expressions uninterrupted by political elite.	Citizens participate directly in decision-making processes. The citizens are online affecting the decisions to be made (mostly at the local level). Citizens set the agenda for both public discussion and decision-making. ICT is a crucial pre-condition for democracy to support coordination among decision makers.
	Liberal E-Democracy	**Deliberative E-Democracy**
Government (politicians and officers) set(s) the agenda	Government serves citizens who participate in elections and related debates. Government would like to inform and be informed by the citizens. There is no clear connection to the decision-making activities. ICT seeks to improve the amount and quality on information exchange between government and citizens.	E-Democracy projects are used for targeted purposes involving citizens in public decision-making processes. The citizens have a good reason to expect that their voices are heard concerning a particular matter. ICT is developed for increased citizen participation and involvement in decision-making processes.
	Citizens mainly implicitly included in decision-making processes	*Citizens have an explicitly defined role in decision-making processes*

Table I. Models of E-Democracy (based on (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming))

Inclusion refers to the idea on whether all adults belonging to a society are able to participate in current debates and decision-making processes. Control of the agenda is related to the issue of who decides what should be decided on in the first place. The models (table 1) introduce main objectives and differences, allowing comparison on different empirical situations or stakeholder perceptions.

The IT artefact

The IT artefact - the core subject matter of the field of Information Systems (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001) – can be conceptualized in several ways. Benbasat and Zmud (2003) frame an IT-artefact as: "the application to enable or support some task(s) embedded within a structure(s) that itself is embedded within a context(s) (p. 186; Figure 1).
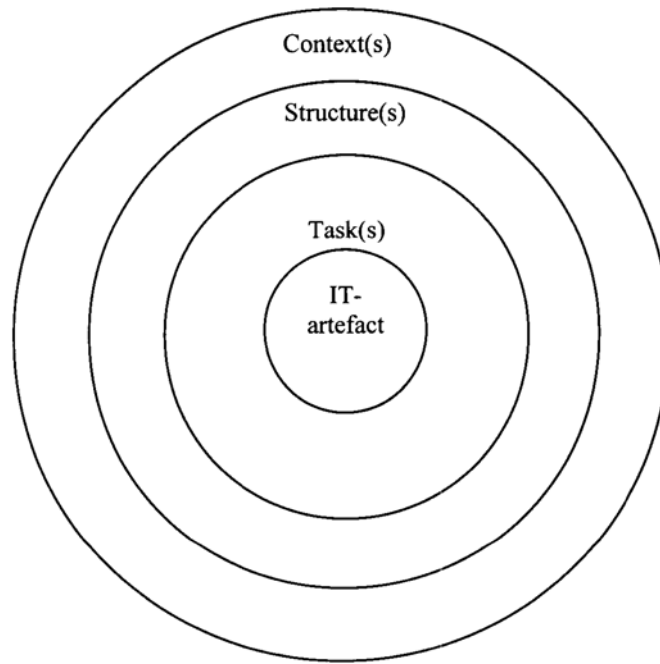
Figure 1. The IT artefact (Benbasat & Zmud, 2003)

Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) identified four different conceptualizations of the IT artefact: the computational, tool, proxy, and ensemble views. The computational view focuses on the IT artefact itself without much interest in the context or tasks how people use it. The tool view assumes that the technology is engineered to do the tasks prescribed by the designers. The proxy view tries to conceptualize the generic "essence" of technology in relation to its surroundings, e.g. by analysing how humans perceive or accept some (generic) technology, how technology is "diffused", or how technology realizes as capital. Hence, the very concept of IT is abstracted, whereas the selected characteristics of the technology environments are used to conceptualize the context in relation to a generice idea of (some) IT. Finally, by looking at the IT artefact from an ensemble view, the technology is "only one element in a "package," which also includes the components required to apply that technical artefact to some socio-economic activity" (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001, p. 125), focusing on all the elements of task(s), structure(s) and context(s).

The genre lens

A genre of communication can be recognized according to its recognised substance and common characteristics of form(s) of a recurrent communicative action type in a community (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). Substance refers to social motives, such as the purpose of the communication in relation to the surrounding organizational tasks and structures (e.g. organizational roles), whereas the form of a genre refers to the physical and linguistic features like layout features, language and media used (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). That is, the form addresses the inner core represented in figure 1; design of the IT artefact itself. If we assume the traditional view on genre in which the substance (e.g. task) and form would remain stable over time, we would actually highlight the tool view. However, the modern conception of genre recognizes that the purposes and forms of genres are evolving and being structured through both explicit and implicit (emerging) processes of media use (Yates, Orlikowski, & Okamura, 1999). That is, the context(s), structure(s) and task(s) effect the IT artefact(s) in context over time and vice versa. Now, genre analysis and use, when regarded as a continuous

120

process of structuration (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992) truly provides us with a conceptual tools to capture characterizations of the IT artefact in itself and the context(s), structure(s) and task(s) of its use, that is, the ensemble view of the IT artefact.

Genre-Based View to the IT Artefact in e-Democracy

The field of e-Democracy has suffered from fuzzy conceptualizations about the actual role of IT in the field (Nugent, 2001; Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming). That is, the contribution of "e" in e-Democracy has been difficult to justify. The literature on IT utilization in e-Democracy (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming; Tops, Horrocks, & Hoff, 2000) has, at best, discussed abstract concepts of IT (such as "the Internet") in light of abstract ideals at the context level. Or, IT is often viewed from the "proxy" view, for example considering "the Internet" as an abstraction in itself in relation to some generally stated "impacts" on the political behaviour of human populations (e.g.(Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002), forgetting scrutiny of the tasks and structures actually supported with particular IT artefacts in context (cf.(Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming).
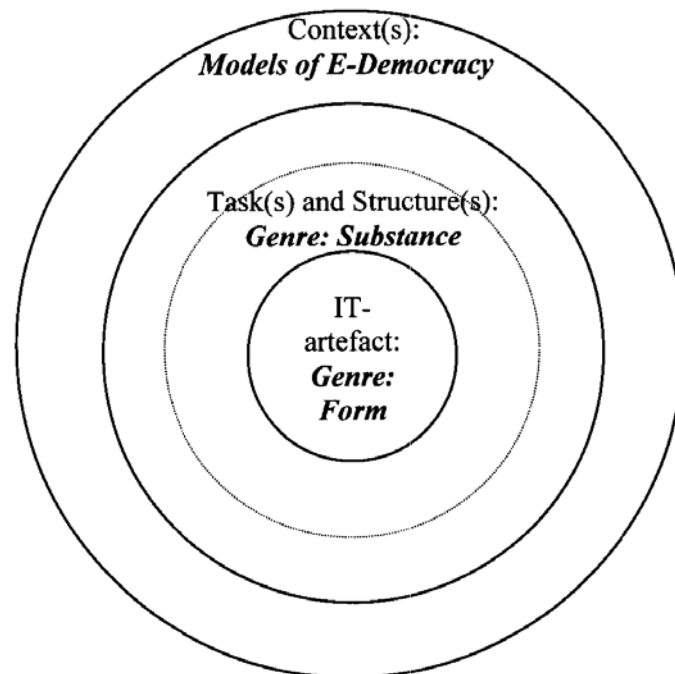
Figure 2: A Genre-Based Ensemble view of IT-artefacts for E-Democracy

The combination of the genre lens to the theories of e-Democracy context(s) makes a major contribution to the field. That is, the genre perspective connects the abstract ideas identified by different democracy models and IT artefacts introduced for E-Democracy purposes. Contextual implementations of tasks and structures can be analysed through genre substance. Now, we do not need to speak fuzzily or too much about technology alone (Hoff et al., 2000), but we can adress the ensemble view to e-Democracy. That is, by introducing the genre perspective knowledge on technology use, development, and impact on e-Democracy can be created and shared at a detailed leve of particular genres, identified within particular kinds of contexts.

Genres for E-Democracy

To illustrate the explanatory potential of the suggested theoretical approach we conduct analyses of E-Democracy genres related to the suggested model of E-Democracy. The genres are identified in reported E-Democracy literature.

Research approach

The literature review process resembles a method followed by Andersen and Henriksen (2005). Online research databases (EBSCO Host, Sage, IEEE Xplore, Communications of AIS and ACM Digital Library) were consulted in November and December 2004. Subsequent searches were completed by the summer of 2005. During the search, the following keywords were used: E-democracy, digital democracy, electronic democracy, Democracy and Internet, Democracy and Information systems. In addition to articles in journals, we found it necessary to widen the selection of literature sources used because few articles had been published in prestigious journals. Hence, academic conference contributions were included (whereas conference proceedings without references to earlier academic contributions were excluded).

The data analysis took two approaches iteratively, one theoretical and one grounded. The theoretical review was first conducted to form an integrated framework in order to classify the empirical literature later on. However, while reading the empirical research and reports of E-democracy implementations, we found that some focused on concerns that remained unaddressed in the theoretical democracy models literature. Hence, our elaborated framework of E-democracy models (table I) was also grounded on the review of the empirical literature, now adding to the theory.

Genres for Liberal E-Democracy

An extensive part of the reported projects are in the category of Liberal E-Democracy. Communication genres for Liberal E-Democracy focus on increased information exchange between major stakeholders. Citizens' influence in the decision making process are not explicitly defined; the objective is to inform, get input from the citizens and to get in touch, but still in with a classical politician – citizen relationship.

Examples of genres for Liberal E-Democracy are dialogue systems, where citizens are asked to submit suggestions to the authorities (Aidemark, 2003). Dialogues are initiated to teach inhabitants to become e-citizens (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004). Alternatively, citizens may be given the opportunity to communicate with representatives and government officials (Nugent, 2001). Another example is consultation systems, focusing on increased amount, speed and accuracy of information exchange between government and citizens to make citizens better suited for participating in the public debate (OECD, 2001). As these examples illustrate, consultations and dialogue systems share a commonality with the Liberal perspective: the influence by citizens is implicit through politicians and government. Thus, Liberal E-Democracy projects do not challenge the traditional power structure as such, but aim for more and better input into the ongoing decision-making processes by the citizens.

Some obstacles for use of Liberal E-Democracy genres are identified. Finn and Detlor (2002) found dissensions between user requirements and government standards, poor marketing of new genres and obtaining funding to E-Democracy projects to be obstacles for such services. Poor design, like restricted opportunity to search, absence of site maps and outdated information (Cullen & Houghton, 2000), were found to decrease participation. Absence of interactivity makes websites static and , according to Ward and Gibson (2003), not influential

on elections or participation. They found the limited audience addressed, high expenses and unstable technology to be obstacles for putting more effort in E-Democracy services for increased participation (Ward & Gibson, 2003).

Some Liberal democracy projects are evaluated as successes. Jensen (2003) judge a discussion board as a success due to the presence of politician and discussion topics closely related to peoples life's. Liberal democracy projects are successfully delivering information and strengthen campaign (Cullen & Houghton, 2000; Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002; Ward & Gibson, 2003) but are to a much lesser extend utilised to interact with citizens (Ward & Gibson, 2003). Table II introduces genres for Liberal E-Democracy.

Form	Substance
Discussion forums	Increasing interactive communication between citizens and politicians for information exchange, not decision making purposes
Dialogue system	Citizens express suggestions and ideas as input to decisions made by politicians
Information broadcasting	To bring information from elite to citizens (top-down)
Governmental homepages	To inform citizens about timely issues.
E-Debates between candidates	Broadcast debates between politicians to inform the electors
Information portals	One stop access point for citizens to achieve information
Consultation	Government/ politicians are able to respond to citizen's questions.
Candidate/ campaigning websites	Promote a candidate or a case

Table II. Genres for Liberal E-Democracy

Genres for Deliberative E-Democracy

In Deliberative E-Democracy information technology is expected to increase citizen participation and interaction with political decision-makers beyond the mere voting, in connection to elections or citizen activism in electoral campaigns (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Chadwick & May, 2003; Ferber, Foltz, & Pugliese, 2003; Hagemann, 2002; Musso, Weare, & Hale, 2000; Myles, 2004; Nugent, 2001; Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Ranerup, 2000; Steyaert, 2000).

The earliest e-mail correspondence systems – LIN (legislative information network) in Alaska and PEN (public electronic network) system in Santa Monica, California – were already in the 1980s involving thousands of citizens in contributing to state-level legislation and municipal decision-making, respectively (Groper, 1996). After the diffusion of the WWW, several Deliberative E-Democracy initiatives emerged, mostly at the municipal level (Aidemark, 2003; Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Carvalho, Rocha, & Oliveira, 2003; Grönlund, 2003). Examples of Deliberative E-Democracy also at other levels of democratic decision-making, have been reported, for example in Norwegian political parties (Heidar & Saglie, 2003), a governmental office in the US (Stanley & Weare, 2004), and in Scottish youth parliament (Macintosh, Robson, Smith, & Whyte, 2003; Masters, Macintosh, & Smith, 2004).

Some obstacles for Deliberative E-Democracy are emphasised. Experimental E-Democracy solutions have often remained unlinked to the decision-making process, which has been regarded as the major problem for suceeding with E-Democracy projects (Heidar & Saglie, 2003; Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003; Myles, 2004; Tambouris & Gorilas, 2003). Moreover, it seems that although politicians and decision-makers might first be positive on E-Democracy experimentations, the enthusiasm can decrease when it becomes visible that the new

communication possibilities could change the existing power structures (Grönlund, 2003; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000). Other obstacles are reported, like the digital divide between competent and less competent users of IT (Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003), the issue that only those already active in connection to traditional democracy practices tend to participate in Deliberative E-Democracy projects (Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002), the general-level resistance to change in governmental and political decision-making structures (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2000; Nugent, 2001), and administrative focusing more distributing resources for managerial e-government projects than promoting new E-Democracy (Chadwick & May, 2003). Table III introduces genres for Deliberative E-Democracy.

Form	Substance
Discussion forum (issue-based), E-Docket	Initiating, drafting and defining political issues, following up decisions
Invitation to submit suggestions	To inform citizens that they can submit suggestions to municipality
(e-) Referendum	To inform decision-makers about citizens' view on a particular issue. Often "for information"
Homepages	To inform citizens about timely issues and to educate them on possibilities for deliberative democracy.
On-line transmissions of meetings	To make decision-processes transparent, to follow-up decision-making of representatives
Citizen panel / "jury"	Getting information from a sample of citizens concerning a specific issue.
On-line questionnaire / Survey	Getting opinions from citizens on particular issue
E-voting / Membership ballot	Getting opinions from citizens / members of a community on particular issues.
"Your question"	Citizens can ask questions from politicians
Public opinion messages	Citizens express their opinions on legislation or local politics, transparency on whether public opinion has been followed on an official form
Real-time chat, Group-to-group chat	Citizens can contact politicians on-line to discuss about issues
Closed discussion forum	Party members can affect opinion within a party.
Expert panel	Collecting viewpoints from targeted debates to decision-makers
Formal consultation report	Choosing appropriate background documentation for a targeted debate
Feedback about targeted discussions	Informing discussants, which representative has been informed and how the discussion affects the decisions.

Table III. Genres for Deliberative E-Democracy

Genres for Partisan E-Democracy

In Partisan E-Democracy ICT is applied to gain visibility for alternative political expressions and critique without interruption from the political elite. Focus are on the potential facilitation of the public sphere on the Internet (Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Paolillo & Heald, 2002), citizen's influence on the decision-making processes (Hurwitz, 1999; Moon & Yang, 2003; Paolillo & Heald, 2002), characteristics of the users (and non-users) of online services (Fung, 2002; Stromer-Galley, 2002; Tsaliki, 2002), characteristics of the language and arguments used (Papacharissi, 2004), different perspectives on control and censuring (Fung, 2002; Rodan, 1998) and equality towards participation in online debates (Schneider, 1996) .

The opportunity to raise alternative voices uninterrupted by the political regimes and communicate across geographic borders and proposing new avenues for political change is seen important (Moon & Yang, 2003; Papacharissi, 2004). Reduced costs and speed of communication enables citizens and interest groups to communicate directly (Moon & Yang, 2003). Prerequisites to suceeed are found to be a population educated to utilise information technology and dissemination of broadband enabling citizens to communicate (Moon &

Yang, 2003). Stromer-Galley (2002) investigated differences between online and offline participators in discussions concerning democratic related issues, indicating that alternative voices are present online because people would like to meet new audiences in a forum where anonymity can be allowed. The importance of being heard and to meet an audience (Moon & Yang, 2003; Paolillo & Heald, 2002; Stromer-Galley, 2002) seems to be important, even though the audience is rare or absent (Hurwitz, 1999; Stromer-Galley, 2002; Tsaliki, 2002). Bringing new voices to the arena (Fung, 2002; Stromer-Galley, 2002) and empower citizens to express alternative ideology (Fung, 2002; Papacharissi, 2004) fortify the importance of Partisan E-Democracy solutions even with the absence of connection to decision making processes.

The experimental solutions have succeeded to a certain level on illuminating alternative information (Hurwitz, 1999; Tsaliki, 2002), but to a much lesser extend to bring in new audience (Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Tsaliki, 2002) Without audience arguments are not brought forward (Tsaliki, 2002) and reflexivity are infrequently (Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003). Then the support of public sphere may become more a dream than a reality (Schneider, 1996). Individual users may dominate the debate without building a common consensus valuable for the society as such (Hurwitz, 1999).

Obstacles for Partisan E-Democracy are discussed in the literature. Most prominent is the discussion focusing on the absent explicit connection to decision making processes (Hurwitz, 1999; Paolillo & Heald, 2002; Schneider, 1996). The online services are not connected to the political process (Papacharissi, 2004) and online activities are sometimes considered to be a panacea for a meaningful debate (Tsaliki, 2002). Further the participation is highly influenced by very few participants posting a major amount of contributions (Schneider, 1996) and are therefore not to be considered representative (Rodan, 1998; Tsaliki, 2002) making it hard to judge the content. Citizens also seems to be more eager on contributing new postings than accumulating present other arguments (Paolillo & Heald, 2002). Building a common consensus is also challenged by the fact that different roles are not explicitly stated and clear for the participants and the audience. Rodan (1998) found participators supporting the existing regime to participate covered behind false roles. Table IV introduces genres for Partisan E-Democracy.

Form	Substance
Discussion forum	To provide a channel for expressing opinions otherwise gaining little or no visibility under the prevailing political system
Chat system	Synchronous system for short and fast messages. Not for long, contemplate messages
Information Portals	Provide either information on a particular case or with a particular view, or as much neutral information as possible
Newsgroups/Usenet groups	Asynchronous discussions, allow longer threads than chat since the time issue is not that present when messages are not in real time
Mail-based discussions	Asynchronous discussions differ from others by introducing a push-technology by sending mails to participants.
Web Blogs	Broadcast it's own views

Table IV. Genres for Partisan E-Democracy

Genres for Direct E-Democracy

It has been stated that Direct Democracy in general has not existed since Athenian polis-state (Banathy, 2000) and that there are currently no examples of direct democracy (Netchaeva, 2002). However, Direct Democracy has its examples also in the modern world: for example,

in a few Swiss cantons, citizens can raise initiatives concerning issues to be decided by referendums and that such democratic movements have gained more visibility also in other societies (Ladner & Brändle, 1999).

Despite of optimistic theorizing, the actual implementations of Direct E-Democracy have remained rare (Aidemark, 2003; Heidar & Saglie, 2003; Myles, 2004; Netchaeva, 2002). For example, some municipalities have failed to establish explicit relationships between citizen participation and the decision-making process in their experimentations on E-Democracy (Myles, 2004). However, at the level of local/municipal politics, examples of Direct E-Democracy have begun to emerge in the form of new www- (or net-) parties, e.g. in Sweden (Aidemark, 2003; Sæbø & Päivärinta, 2005). This development seems to emerge especially due to new actors and citizen movements enriching the map of political parties, as the traditional party organizations seem to stick to their representational practices despite of several trials of new communication media, e.g., in Norway (Heidar & Saglie, 2003) and Denmark (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003).

Hence some rare examples of genre repertoires promoting Direct E-Democracy are identified. Two identified Swedish Internet-parties, Demoex (www.demoex.net) and Knivsta.nu (www.Knivsta.nu), have explicitly stated to involve the ideal of Direct E-Democracy in their internal decision-making processes. These parties have also gained representatives to use political power the municipal boards (in Vallentuna and Knivsta). Especially, the www-based communication tools are explicitly defined to be used as a part of the decision-making process and actions taken by the party and its representatives. Table V introduces genres for Direct E-Democracy identified from the two internet parties.

Form	Substance
User Registration	To join the Internet party and to get rights to act in the community
Open discussion/ idea forum	To raise new issues by the citizens and discuss about them
Decision-making on issues to be debated	To decide, which issues are to be debated and voted further, so that the representatives can raise the issue in the municipal board
Targeted debate forums (before particular decisions)	To discuss about issues rose for formal discussion.
Background documentation of issues	To inform the users about timely issues and the, decisions taken.
E-Voting	Telling the party representatives how to act in the municipality council

Table V. Genres for Direct E-Democracy

Summary of the review

Each democracy model generally assumes that citizens should participate in democratic communication, but the purpose of such communication varies according to the idea of citizen participation and relationships between citizens and other stakeholders which varies among the democracy models. Whereas all democracy models can involve use of ICT, some forms and individually seemingly the same genres of communication (i.e., parts of the what-aspect) can be actually same regardless of the democracy model. For example discussion forums were identified as a potential communication form in every model. However, at the level of the whole repertoires of genres under different democracy models, the issue of why to communicate varies (Sæbø & Päivärinta, 2005). Communication genres of the liberal model focus on general-level topics connected to elections and one-way communication between elections, while the deliberative and direct democracy models highlight more issue-based

communication genres. Partisan e-democracy includes both issue-based and general-level political communication. Since the contemporary direct democracy experiments still need to function in the context of representative democracy systems, e.g. internet parties still have a need for selecting representatives, which mainly can occur through rather traditional elections.

The genre analysis of reported E-Democracy initiatives reveals several differences in the ideas and implementations of E-Democracy applications. Different E-democracy models require different implementations of communication genres to be shared among citizens, officers, and politicians. We argue that implementations of E-Democracy genres need to be considered holistically from the viewpoint of the political and decision-making context as a part of democratization in the whole society, not as a target of development in itself. A great proportion of such genres need to be accepted and shared among the politicians and officers as well in parallel of the general visibility of such genres in the eyes of citizens through varying media.

Discussion

Our paper illustrates how the "IT artefact" can be conceptualized from the "ensemble view" (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001) in the field of e-Democracy by using the genre lens together with application-domain specific theories of democracy models. At the level of context we thus need a theory which demarcates a general-level purpose or purposes in universe of discourse, under which a repertoire of genres (Orlikowski & Yates, 1994) can be meaningfully organized. For example, a form of technology can be same under two contexts (e.g. the form of a discussion forum can be used both under the liberal and direct technologies), but through analysing genre substance in context (e.g. in relation to tasks and organization structures), we can still identify how IT artefacts based on a similar form can have different roles and actually different implementations at a fine-tuned level in different contexts.

The suggested framework for genre analysis can be rather straightforwardly used as a means for analysing IT artefacts by two interest groups in the field of e-Democracy: the developers of democratic contexts and the developers of technology. From the viewpoint of a democratic context, a repertoire of genres which serves the general-level purpose(s) of that context can be identified by defining the structures and tasks and finally the forms of available or imaginable information technologies which could correspond to those. On the other hand, a vendor of a particular technology, such as an e-voting package, can, in turn, identify the contexts and tasks which would fit to the technology with reasonable (or minimum) efforts of customization. For example, customization may be needed e.g. for fine-tuning the e-voting package for general-level elections vs. for issue-based decision-making of a municipal internet party. Hence any particular technology can be scrutinized from the viewpoint of identifying individual genres which could be able to utilize the technological forms in question. Genre analysis could then provide a common language, or a set of "boundary objects", according to which context-oriented developers and technology-oriented developers could share intersecting ideas for development – concerning particular societal systems as well as particular IT products (cf. also(Päivärinta, 2001)).

In the field of e-Democracy, it is easy to see the potential of the genre-based approach to the analysis of IT artefacts: genres for wide audiences related to unquestionable democratic rights of citizens simply need to be explicitly defined and enacted at the level of societies. Although more turbulent organizational domains may require more improvised and ad hoc communication using varying media without conscious application of prescribed genres, a

great proportion of IS development and design in other fields may benefit from the genre-based theorizing. That is, whenever the context-oriented developers can predict the structures and tasks beforehand or technology-oriented developers want to engineer towards a prescribed set of tasks and structures, the genre based way of thinking can be applied.

Conclusion

Our research responds to calls for establishing theoretical grounds for the hitherto scattered field of e-government (Andersen & Henriksen, 2005; Grönlund, 2004), focusing on the issue of e-democracy. We argue that our work suggests at least two contributions for research: 1) a possibility to cumulate knowledge of studies on success of particular e-democracy models and particular implementations of communication applications under them (which can provide also guidelines for practitioners) and 2) a possibility to categorize, compare, and criticize e-democracy research which has remained implicit on the actual democracy ideals pursued or the communication forms implemented.

Empirical research on e-democracy remains a scattered field lacking theoretical foundations and cumulative knowledge that would guide research and practice forward. In this paper we respond to the call for more theory building in the field (Andersen & Henriksen, 2005; Grönlund, 2003) by introducing a framework of genre analysis under four stereotypical models of e-democracy.

We suggest that our framework provides a basis for more cumulative research efforts and structured practice, which would be able to utilize previous research on democracy ideals and genres more systematically. For these purposes, we suggest efforts to utilize and test the framework further in proactive research tightly connected to practice. We expect the framework to help practitioners in envisioning new e-democracy solutions as well as researchers in cumulating knowledge of the field. More efforts need to be directed to build up a dynamic experience base discussing particular e-democracy genres further so that such knowledge would really cumulate among the researchers and practitioners. As new communication technologies and communication preferences of people will likely still change, the importance of such work will not decrease in the foreseeable future.

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Being Specific on E-Democracy by explicit identification of democracy models and Communication Genres

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Abstract.
E-Democracy research discusses relationships between new communication technologies and democratization, whereas practical e-Democracy initiatives experiment with new applications for renewing democratic communication in context. This paper presents a framework for e-Democracy research and practice, grounded upon literature on democracy models and theory of genres of communication. The framework discusses e-democracy models according to the initiators of communicative action in democratic discourse and the relation communication (explicit /implicit) to decision making processes. An analysis of web-based discussion forums used in varying e-Democracy initiatives illustrates the explanatory potential of the framework to discuss the relationship between new communication media and development of democracy.

1. Introduction

Contemporary democracies involve several stakeholders, such as politicians, officers, professional interest groups, and – most importantly – citizens. Participation of such a variety of stakeholders requires enactment on how to communicate, with whom, and for what purposes. In traditional representational political spheres, the ideas and rules of communication, such as campaigns, public debates and voting related to elections are shared among the (active) stakeholders. That is, genres and genre repertoires of communication [20] [35] are more or less explicitly pre-defined among the stakeholders of democratic communities.

Recent theorizing has suggested new democracy models [3] [12] [33] enabled by digital media, such as the Internet and World Wide Web. The concept of e-Democracy refers to the utilization of new information and communication technologies (ICT) in debates and decision-making processes among the stakeholders. However, despite idealistic intentions of pioneering e-Democracy theories and experiments, their actual impact on public participation has remained, in a clear majority of cases, rather modest [5] [14]. Moreover, a number of e-Democracy researchers speak of new media at a general level, discussing questions like: "What impact does Internet have on democracy?" Such research often stays rather unspecific with regard to both the pursued democracy ideal and the actual applications of utilizing new media; providing few constructive insights for further research and practice.

This paper introduces a framework for e-Democracy based on theories of democracy models and theory of genres of communication. We illustrate how a single application (the web-based discussion forum) can have different roles if implemented under different democracy models. Based on this analysis, we argue that our framework will provide a theoretical basis to accumulate knowledge within the hitherto scattered field of e-Democracy.

2. Four Models of e-Democracy

The literature of democracy models uses varying characteristics in order to clarify their differences, making a detailed comparison of the competing models difficult. To integrate the literature, we ended up to distinguish between two general-level dimensions: *the initiator of democratic debate* (citizens vs. officers or politicians) and *the relationship between the debate and actual decisions* (implicit vs. explicit).

Democratic communication can be initiated by citizens [26] [32], by external stakeholders such as the press [7] or parties [15] or by the government [18] [31]. By moving from traditional communication media to e-Democracy, the visibility of power structures affecting democratic debate arenas may become more diffused. For example, different stakeholders do not always share assumptions on the purpose of participation or their role in the decision-making processes in an e-Democracy arena [27] [31]. The issues of who controls media may affect the citizen's role; especially in societies were the freedom of speech is threatened [26].
With regard to the citizen influence on decision-making, the literature often draws analytical lines between representative and direct democracies [12] [16] [33], where citizen-oriented initiatives to affect decisions usually refer to the idea of direct democracy. Relationship of communication and the actual decision making process represents another dimension of discussion [3] [11] [12] [14]. Outside the formalized power structures, citizen-driven debates can also emerge without a strong connection to the decision making process. Such debates without a clear connection to decision making are less illuminated in the theory on democracy

models, although a number of such projects appear in the empirical reports of emerging e-democracy. Hence, these discussions bring the dimension of explicit vs. implicit relationship between a democratic debate and actual decision-making in the given context into our framework.

Table 1 illustrates these two main dimensions and their relationship to the democracy models suggested in the literature, resulting in four general-level ideas of democracy: liberal, partisan deliberative, and direct. Table 2 illustrates the link between the four e-democracy models and the democracy models reported in current literature.

	Partisan Democracy	Direct Democracy
Citizen-driven initiatives	Discursive deliberation [6]	Classical democracy[12] Direct democracy[12] [17] Cyberdemocracy [3] Libertarian democracy [33]
Government-driven initiatives	**Liberal democracy** Liberal and developmental democracy [12] Pluralism democracy [12] [33] Competitive Elitist democracy [12] Demo Elitist democracy [3] Legalist democracy [12] [33] Consumer democracy [3] Aggregative democracy [6]	**Deliberative democracy** Participatory democracy [12] [23] [33] Neo-Republican democracy [3] Plebiscitary democracy [33] Deliberative democracy [8]
	Implicit relationship to the decision making process	Explicit relationship to the decision making process

Table 1: Matrix identifying reported democracy models

Dimensions	democracy models	Main characteristics
Liberal democracy Initiated by government Implicit connection to the decision making process	Liberal and developmental democracy [12]	Representative government where citizen are involved via voting, as representatives at the local level and participators in public debate.
	Aggregative democracy [6]	Politic is a fight between conflicting individual interests. Politicians are responsible for aggregating those interests as they occur via elections.
	Pluralism democracy [12] [33]	Competitive electoral system with at least two parties secures government by minorities and political liberty. Citizens have the right to express their ideas, vote and organise.
	Competitive Elitist democracy [12] / Demo elitist democracy [3]	Elected parliaments are the basis for the democracy. Experts representing (or claiming to represent) different interests in society act in policy networks. These political experts represent the elite, which are intensively involved in the formation of policy and definition of the public services.
	Legalist democracy [12] [33]	The majority principle is protecting individuals from arbitrary government. Effective political leadership is guided by liberal principles, and there is a minimum state intervention in civil society and private life
	Consumer democracy [3]	The main democratic value resides in the citizen's right to service. The model seeks to re-focus democracy around the efficient provision of public services". Competent consumers need to be well-informed; implying an important role for information and communication systems through which politicians inform citizens.
Partisan democracy Initiated by citizens or external stakeholders Implicit connection to decision making process	Habermas' Discursive theoretical deliberation [6]	The public has to legalise their action in an active communicative society. The division between politic and society are not natural. Commitment and consensus are a requirement for a free public debate.
Deliberative democracy Initiated by government Explicit connection to the decision making process	Participatory democracy [12] [23] [33]	Equal rights can only be achieved in a participatory society which fosters a sense of political efficacy. A knowledgeable citizenry are capable of taking sustained interest in the governing process. Less power to bureaucracy in favour of more involvement by the citizens.
	Neo-Republican democracy [3] / Plebiscitary democracy [33]	Citizens are regarded as active, especially at micro- and local levels. The model has radical assumptions on shared social rights and responsibilities, where revitalization of civic spirit is a central objective. ICT facilitates an increased number of participants, high-quality discussion and social inclusion in decision-making.
	Deliberative democracy [8]	Highlight the role of open discussion, the importance of citizen participation, and the existence of a well-functioning public sphere.
Direct democracy Initiated by citizens or external stakeholders Explicit connection to the decision making process	Classical democracy [12]	Citizens had political equality and are free to rule and be ruled in turn. Main decisions were made by all in the assembly with sovereign power. Citizens are admitted to participate in politics focusing on society, not individuals.
	Direct democracy [12] [17] /Cyberdemocracy [3]	A radical alternative compared to the traditional democratic institutions and features. Traditional institutions lose power in favour of network-based groups and individuals. ICT no longer represents a supplement to traditional communication channels, emerging as a crucial pre-condition for democracy
	Libertarian democracy [33]	Emphasis the autonomous politics by citizens in their own associations using the horizontal communication capabilities of ICT. Traditional institutions can, in the most extreme view, been put aside by politic created in networks.

Table 2: democracy models classified

Liberal democracy involves government-based initiatives and citizens' implicit connection to the decision making process. Still, representatives have the opportunity to aggregate opinions from individuals [11], and thereby make informed decisions. Liberal democracy aims at informed citizens (especially under elections) and getting informative feedbacks. However, citizens participate less in decision making of issues as such. ICT are utilised to inform citizens by e.g. using discussion forums and to get feedback from citizens [15] [31]. The main foci vary slightly between different democracy models: the citizen's right to vote [12], the presence of at least two parties to secure political liberty [12] [33], experts claiming to represent different interests in policy network [3] [12], the importance of majority principle, minimum state intervention in civil society [12] [33], and the citizens right to public services [3]. **Partisan Democracy** is characterised by citizen-initiated direct participation and implicit connection to the decision making process. Active citizens participate in the political debate, but not through traditional channels or only via representatives. The discursive deliberation model focuses on how to achieve commitment through discourse

representing diverging viewpoints [11]. Independent communication channels (not owned or directed by the government) is a prerequisite to achieve a rational discourse [11]. Unrestricted discussions have the opportunity to set the agenda, like the use of independent online communities discussing politics [32], web-based discussions [7], Usenet discussions [13] [28] and Blogging [9] [18]. Partisan democracy is highly dependent on information technology. None of the examples mentioned above would have been possible without bringing modern ICT in action. A major challenge for such projects is to achieve influence on the public opinion.

Deliberative democracy connects citizens more explicitly to decision making processes than the liberal model [12] [23]. Still, as a form of representative democracy, the input and deliberation between citizens and politicians constitute the legalisation of display of force. Main foci varies from the importance of participation to secure a balance of power [12], achievement of equal right only via a participatory society [12] [23] [33], the quality of participation and involvement by the citizens [3] [33], to the role of open discussions in a well-functioning public sphere [8]. E-democracy projects are constructed to support participative and deliberative elements in the society, exemplified by the use of discussion forums for debating targeted public matters [10] or web-based dockets to gather input from citizens [30]. Possibilities for **direct (e-) Democracy** have been recently highlighted. Emphasis has been put on the autonomous politics by citizens in their own associations [33], or on how traditional institutions lose power in favour of network-based groups or individuals [3] [12] [17]. ICT has been visioned to have a critical role in modern direct democracy [3]. An e-Democracy initiative following the ideal of direct democracy requires communication technology to support coordination among a great number of decision makers, i.e. citizens, possibly geographically scattered, with diverse interests and backgrounds. Anyhow, few actual e-democracy implementations within this category have been documented, despite of optimistic hopes of the early advocates of "cyberdemocracy" [3].

3.   Genres of communication in e-Democracy

The literature on democracy models discusses about the connection between media and actual political communication. However, democracy models alone provide few suggestions to guideline practical system implementations. To participate in any democracy we argue that the participants need to share concretely defined repertoires of *genres of communication* [1] [21] [35] in particular democratic arenas. A genre of communication can be characterized by shared purpose(s) and form(s) of a recurrent communicative action type identified in a community [35]. At an abstract level, we can identify such purposes independently of communication media [35] – for example, a 'ballot' can be recognized as a 'ballot', whether conducted traditionally and manually in election locations or via the Internet. As changes and advancements in communication media often affect the whole context of communication [34], more detailed frameworks for genre analysis set focus also on other facets characterizing and analysing change in a particular genre of interest, including media. Yoshioka et al. [37] suggest the "5W1H" framework for analysing genres and identifying stereotypical abstract genre taxonomies for promoting design of communication systems (why, what, who, when, where, and how).

New communication media and IT infrastructures facilitate evolution of existing genres and innovation of new ones. Genre studies have shown that new or elaborated genres are seldom automatically shared explicitly among all of the potential users of a new medium [4] [29] [36]. That is, more or less explicit social interaction or meta-communication is needed for reaching shared understanding of novel genres to be used for communication among a set of

human actors in a given context [24] [36]. The very awareness of genres in a particular domain of interest is considered as a possible approach to promote ideals of democratic and equal communication [24].

Few, if any, democratic societies currently rely on the ideal of equal and inclusive citizen participation in further designing of our communication systems for democracy (and thus democracy itself) dynamically [2]. In fact, the western democracies were established by elites which defined beforehand how the citizen could interact with, although also affect, political and governmental powers. This situation is much more visible in societies where only one party or ideology has dominated the governmental system and/or the public sphere (e.g., [7] [19] [26]). As well, at the level of local or municipal democracy, issues related to existing power structures need to be considered and dealt with in connection to new systems of e-democracy, which may actually shake the existing power structures [10]. Hence, we distinguish between the issue of who communicates [37] and ownership of a genre, i.e., the question of whose. Table 3 summarizes the resulting "6W1H" genre analysis framework to sensitize the stakeholders governing the actual genre creation and reshaping processes for e-Democracy.

Why?	What is the purpose or rationale of an identified genre shared by the communicators? What needs to be reached with the genre(s)?[37]
Whose?	Who *own(s)* the genre? Who can "blow the whistle" to stop communication or to decide on developing the genres in the context of analysis, if any?
Who?	Who communicate? Which stakeholders are expected to use particular genre(s)? [37]
What?	What content is communicated? What is expected from the style, language and form (if not materialized as a part of implementation)? [37]
Where?	Where does communication take place? (E.g. certain geographical location in space and/or logical site in cyberspace). [37]
When?	Timing? Is there any time-related issues related to the genre(s) in question? [37]
How?	How is the communication implemented? What social rules and technological choices concern the genre(s)? [37]

Table 3: 6W1H Framework for Analyzing Genres of e-Democracy (Adapted from [37])

By speaking of communication media for e-Democracy and analysing them in light of the 6W1H (Table 3), detailed viewpoints to communication technology can be revealed, especially if compared to a discussion about a new communication medium or infrastructure (e.g. "the Internet") per se. Interestingly, by reviewing the e-Democracy literature, we noticed that many reports implicitly mention one or several particular, often abstract-level, genres related to democracy to illustrate the "impact of new media". However, the literature remains usually rather unspecific about the particular kind of democracy to be "promoted" by a new communication medium.

4. Being specific about democracy models and genres: Discussing about discussion forums for e-Democracy

In the field of e-Democracy, several examples of Web-based discussion forums have been referred to illustrate how new media, especially the Internet, potentially involve citizens into political processes. Such discussion forums have been referred to with several names such as 'newsgroups' [22], 'on-line forums' [25], 'discussion boards' [31], or even 'chat rooms' [7]. For the purpose of this paper, we define a discussion forum at a general level as a Web-based

discussion space, in which the users can send/place postings and responses to particular postings asynchronously. The postings and responses can form discussion threads.

4.1 Discussion forums for liberal democracy

Jensen [15] describes a Danish experiment, Nordpol.dk, in which a county set up a web-based discussion forum as a part of digital services in connection to local elections (table 4). Nordpol.dk had not any explicit connection to actual decision-making processes concerning the municipality, and the rationale for its implementation was rather plainly informative. The candidates were trying to inform citizens about their arguments whereas the citizens were trying to "lobby" the candidates on the issues of importance to them significantly less. Some stakeholders (or at least the author) assumed the ideal of representative democracy, instead of the ideal of "cyberdemocracy", as he called the experiment as a "democratic success in light of the prior … expectations and experiences" (p.45). He concludes by saying: "Democratic online dialogue seems possible under the right circumstances, taking the necessary precautions and clarifying the purpose and the goal in advance" (p. 47). As the author does not specify whose expectations were in question and from whose viewpoint the circumstances had been "right", we assume that the project was considered "a success" from the viewpoint of the project owner, municipality, who coordinated the whole initiative.

Hence, Nordpol.dk represents the liberal democracy model, in which communication takes place mainly in connection to elections. For such a model, the purposes for communication are defined beforehand by the authorities, who also moderate and control the debate (although moderately in this case). The democracy is regarded as "happened" after the citizens have been informed about the candidate viewpoints, and vice versa, before the elections.

Ranerup [25] and Sæbø & Päivärinta [31] describe almost identical cases in Swedish and Norwegian contexts: municipality-owned discussion forums of local issues under beforehand-defined categories. Ranerup [25] denotes the need for politicians to participate in the electronic discussion forums to facilitate their use. Sæbø & Päivärinta [31] describe a Norwegian case in which politicians and citizens were involved in a discussion forum under the elections and shortly after. They denoted clear differences between the assumptions of citizens vs. politicians regarding which democracy model should be pursued [31]. Whereas the most politicians seemed to use the forum to inform and to be informed, a great many citizens had wishes that the forum would develop towards a more deliberative (or "neo-republican") form, in which the citizens would continuously inform and be informed with their representatives through such a forum [31].

4.2 Discussion forums for partisan democracy

Many discussion forums have been set up by stakeholders not directly linked to existing political or decision-making structures in the society. Usenet discussion newsgroups [13] [22] [28] probably represent earliest examples of those. In a few cases, web-based discussion forums have emerged as a channel for expressing opinions for oppositional groups not finding ways to express themselves in often politically dominated conventional media of certain societies. Examples include a newspaper-owned discussion forum, singtao.com, in Hong Kong [7] and a discussion forum owned by the opposition's presidential candidate supporters, "Rohsamo", in South Korea [19]. Such "independent discussion forums" could be described further in light of the 6W1H framework as described in table 4.

All the three examples represent different types of discussion forums under the partisan democracy model. Common to these is opposition or independence in relation to existing

power structures. No explicit connection to the existing governmental or political decision-making processes is defined, and the impact of such discussion forums is materialized mostly through general-level pressure of visible "public opinion" [7] [28] or through elections [19]. Beyond the success of "Rohsamo" in South Korean presidential campaign of 2002, which actually turned the oppositional movement towards representative democracy, few reports indicate a visible impact of such discussion forums and related e-Democracy systems to cause changes. However, already the existence of a "public sphere" alongside one-sided "official" truths of totalitarian or semi-totalitarian societies may represent a "voice" to be heard indirectly in decision-making. Fung's [7] observations on "professional" pro-government writers indicate that at least in some cases the governmental forces cannot plainly ignore the "voice" of such forums.

		Partisan Democracy		**Direct Democracy**
Citizen-driven initiatives	Why?	To provide a channel for expressing opinions otherwise gaining little or no visibility under the prevailing political system – often a totalitarian one.	Why?	To involve citizens actively to inform how the party representatives should make politics in the municipal council. To "complement" the representational democracy.
	Whose?	Varying stakeholders may possess "oppositional" discussion forums. Usenet is, in theory, owned by the discussants themselves, as they can suggest and vote for new newsgroups and the discussion is not censored based on the topical content of the messages [22]. An "oppositional" discussion forum can also be owned by media (such as a newspaper in [7]) or an oppositional candidate [19]. Common to all of these is that the ownership is based on some kind of volunteer activism emerging among the citizens or other stakeholders independent of the prevailing government	Whose?	The party owns the forum; the members/users can debate on the timely issues raised by the representative politicians of the party. The members / users can also raise issues by themselves on the "open debate forum".
	Who?	Citizens are the major communicators. However, Fung [7]) reports of the emergence of "professional communicators" representing the government "under cover" of anonymity. In Moon & Yang [19], a discussion forum provided an important channel for an oppositional party, which did not otherwise gain visibility in the mainstream media influenced heavily by the contemporary government. That is, the politicians used the forum to inform their supporters, in addition to citizen-to-citizen communication.	Who?	The registered users. The representatives report about timely issues in the municipality council. The party publishes documents for background information.
	What?	Freely initiated discussions about prevailed political matters – especially critique on the prevailing political structures and systems. In Usenet, the users themselves can even suggest and vote for new topics / discussion groups to be established [22] in addition to discussing topics under the existing topic structures	What?	Discussions initiated by the representatives in the council, the party, and also individual members of the party. E-voting about timely issues. E-mailing-lists about timely contributions. In parallel, real meetings between the members and representatives take place to inform the representatives.
	Where?	In the Internet-based discussion sites. Moon & Yang [19] report how the discussion forum was used to mobilize real-life events related to the elections by the oppositional party.	Where?	In the www-site (http://www.knivsta.nu/) to be logged-in by the registered users.
	When?	Critique on totalitarian systems on-going [19]. Within less totalitarian systems in connection to elections [19] or other big timely issues.	When?	Discussion forums are open all the time for contributions.
	How?	The anonymity of users is important in discussion forums concerning the totalitarian systems. The sites are operated and facilitated by the activists – or the 3rd party service providers that are somehow involved in the idea of democracy. No explicit connections to the decision-making processes of the contemporary political or governmental organizations.	How?	Each user needs to register and have a username (e-mail address) and password. The party has technicians who operate the site. E-mailings about contributions and timely issues for those who have ordered them.
Government-driven initiatives		**Liberal democracy**		**Deliberative democracy**
	Why?	The goal had been stated explicitly as "to bring together citizens and politicians". I.e. increasing interactive communication as such was seen as valuable. No clear connection between the	Why?	Active citizen consultation concerning targeted timely issues

		communication and later decision-making was defined.		
	Whose?	The county initiated and managed the forum and the civil servants defined the rules how to use it, also being able to moderate discussions as necessary. The county invited politicians to participate and advertised the forum for the citizens.	Whose?	Governmental and municipal organizations, e.g. Federal Secretary [30] or municipality [10] own and moderate the discussion forums.
	Who?	120 different participants (46 candidates/politicians with 300 postings, 74 citizens with 150 postings)	Who?	Citizens: Stanley & Weare [30] and Grönlund [10] both report increased citizen activity to comment on the issues if compared to the option in which digital solutions would not be in place. Officials are responsible for informing citizens with background documents. Politicians participate as well. Representatives of professional organizations [30] can use web-based dockets and discussion forums now as well.
	What?	The website included election-oriented information about the election itself and the parties / candidates. The debate forum was considered as "the most important part". The debate was beforehand organized into categories by the moderators. Altogether 450 postings were resulting within 2 months.	What?	Varying genres of background information, discussion forum (or docket), and possibly e-voting mechanisms [10] may be desired. In the discussion forums, targeted issues make targeted discussions possible.
	Where?	The site was advertised in ordinary media, but the communication took place in the Internet and the site in question. The political context was a Danish county, local administration.	Where?	In both of the cases, these processes took place in parallel in traditional locations (e.g. via meetings, press, mail) and the new web-based solutions.
	When?	The forum was on-line 2 months just under the election, after which the site was closed.		A pre-defined time-window for debate had been set in the both cases. The system was up and running 24 hours 7 days per week.
	How?	The moderators defined a "netiquette" for the others to follow. People could add postings and responses to others' postings. After the elections the forum was closed. Most contributors used their real names, very few used an anonymous nick-name		In the FMCSA case the moderators defined the rules and also censored the messages they considered irrelevant. The Kalix case [10] does not get into the details of the actual implementation.
		Implicit relationship to the decision making process		**Explicit relationship to the decision making process**

Table 4: Summary of the Framework based on e-democracy models and genre theory

4.3 Discussion forums for deliberative democracy

Discussion forums have also been used for targeted purposes actually involving citizens in public decision-making processes. For example, Stanley & Weare report a case of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), which used a web-based docket, together with a discussion forum, to gather citizen opinions to inform a "long-term strategy for improving commercial motor vehicle, operator, and carrier safety" [30]. Grönlund discusses a Swedish municipality, Kalix, where a web site including a discussion forum was used to debate on targeted public matters as well, such as citizen input on the city plan [10].

Such genres of "consultation via a discussion forum" (table 4) represent deliberative democracy, where the politicians and officials are continually sensitive to the opinions from the field. Still, the politicians or governmental organs remain responsible for initiating and defining the actual topics to be discussed. Hence, the cases of Kalix and FMCSA could be categorized under the representative model of democracy. The difference between the "general-level" debate and the targeted efforts to use discussion forums resides in the fact that here the citizens have a good reason to expect that their voices are heard concerning a particular matter. That is, the relationship between communication through the discussion forum and the actual decision-making processes appears here as explicit (or, at least, more explicit) compared to the discussion forums described in [15] [25] [31].

4.4 A discussion forum for direct democracy

In Knivsta, Sweden (http://www.knivsta.nu/), a newly established local party (Knivsta.nu) uses a discussion forum for discussion and decision-making as an important part of the whole party organization (table 4). The party got 11,5% of the votes in the local elections in 2003, and 4 representatives in the municipal council. The Internet-party in Knivsta explicitly seeks to "complement the representational democracy" with direct democracy at a party level. The "democracy idea" (www.Knivsta.Nu) states explicitly that the representatives will not act only according to their own viewpoints, but according to the informed viewpoints from the citizens / members. The discussion forum and occasional e-voting play an important role in this process. It remains not fully explicit whether and how the discussions truly affect the representatives' behaviour in the municipality council. Still, the discussion forum and occasional e-voting represent a "direct channel" to affect the representatives of this party, as they are active with regard to the site and the discussion forums. Together with other solutions, such as e-mailing lists and e-voting mechanisms, such use of discussion forums comes closer to "direct" democracy, in which the citizens are "on-line" affecting the decisions to be made at the local level.

5.   Discussion and further research

Table 4 summarizes the analysis of discussion forums to illustrate each of the above-identified democracy models in light of stereotypical communications related to them.

As our analysis shows, a particular medium, such as a discussion forum, can be meaningfully used in relation to any preferred model of democracy. The differences between different democracy models are more visible with regard to the main purposes identified with democratic communication in the first place, ownership of communicative genres, and the relationships among the different stakeholders. The framework of democracy models and genre theory is able to make distinctions between the discussions about certain media for e-Democracy. Especially, it shows that it is not sufficient to speak of a particular medium as such, but that the genre-related issues are needed for clarifying particular uses of technology for e-Democracy in a particular context.

Theoretically, our results address use of domain-specific theories, such as the theory of democracy models, in connection to genre theory in order to be specific about media use for communication in human communities and to grasp variances in uses of similar communication applications for differing purposes. In this case, theories about the democracy models were needed to reveal varying purposes of a seemingly unified communication genre, the discussion forum. The issue of *whose*, i.e. who owns the genres, appeared as an enlightening and important facet of genre analysis.

Our framework proposes two major contributions, which address the differences in genres of communication within different models of e-democracy. First, by looking at the e-democracy models and compare with the actual setting for the e-democracy solution, practitioners are able to get a preliminary idea of the opportunity set for the conditions they are dealing with. Second, by involving the genre system (6W1H), practitioners are offered a tool for discussing about detailed purposes, forms and other implementation issues of e-Democracy systems.

As pointed out earlier current e-democracy literature has, to certain extent, remained implicit on democracy models. Discussions about impacts of e-Democracy have remained abstract and unspecific on the lessons learned. Further research should be explicit on the democracy models pursued and the genres needed for implementing the desired ideals. Genre analyses of

also other e-Democracy applications than discussion forums could provide more comprehensive understanding of lessons learned from reported e-Democracy experiments.

Ideally, a comprehensive review of e-Democracy literature could reach genre taxonomy [37] of e-Democracy with lessons learned from practice concerning the implementations of different democracy models. This could lead to more cumulative knowledge of e-Democracy within a clearer set of theoretical and practical guidelines than the hitherto mostly fragmented efforts. Such knowledge of lessons learned concerning particular democracy models could be used as a basis for proactive action research projects so that new initiatives could be explicitly informed by previous experience.

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A process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy initiatives

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Abstract.
An increased number of public organizations engage in E-Democracy projects to improve their capability to communicate on democratically issues. Such efforts are often complex due to lack of experiences from earlier projects and the complex nature on the communication taking place.

This article addresses two major problems identified from the E-Democracy literature and a conducted case study in a Norwegian local municipality. First the purposes for E-Democracy projects are often unclear and somewhat naïvely understood. To address this issue I draw upon the democracy model literature which identifies purposes for different democracies. Second it seems difficult to connect ICT to the identified objectives. As a response to this problem I suggest a theoretical lens bridging knowledge on democracy models, the genre of communication theory and IT artifacts. Based on these theories I propose a process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy projects. I argue that the process can guide practice and research by identifying different objectives and opportunities in E-Democracy initiatives.

Introduction

E-Democracy refers to the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in political debates and decision-making processes, complementing or contrasting traditional means of communication. The idea of democracy leans fundamentally on effective communication and informed decision-making about public issues among citizens, politicians, officers and other stakeholders who may relate to the decisions (Habermas, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000).

Whereas there is a reasonably extensive theoretical discussion on E-Democracy (see e.g.(Bellamy, 2000; Gimmler, 2001; Van Dijk, 2000)), the need for empirical studies and subsequent theory-building in the field have been addressed (Andersen & Henriksen, 2005; Grönlund, 2004). There is a need to build a theoretical and empirical base to better understand the link between technology and politics (Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002; Scheufele & Nisbet, 2002) since the connection is poorly understood (Moon & Yang, 2003). In particular the connection between ICT and new media in E-Democracy projects needs to be addressed more in detail (Smith, 2000; Steyaert, 2000).

The absence of connection between technology and democracy is given as an explanation in the E-Democracy literature of the often modest impact reported E-Democracy initiatives have on public participation (Hoff, Löfgren, & Torpe, 2003). Technology is often simplistically coupled to direct democracy, ignoring the need to be more specific on democracy to understand how ICT influence (Bellamy & Taylor, 1998; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000). Løfgren (2000) states that "We seldom find consideration on the way which the use of new technology might affect democracy" (p. 57). This is supported by Schmidtke (1998) who identified the missing discussion on the impact ICT holds on processes for democratic decision-making as a major reason for restricted success in E-Democracy projects. Tops, Horrock and Hoff add a similar conclusion in their investigation on Danish political parties: "Political parties appear to have entered the world of new technology without any predefined or explicit strategy concerning the ways in which the use of new technology might effect democracy" (Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000). Aidemark (2003) state that "The important lesson is that there is no simple connection between the problems of democracy and the IT-based systems that are supposed to be supportive. It is the intention and strategies behind the democratic processes that are important" (p. 155). There is a need for addressing the objectives, strategies and processes instead of focusing on technology concerns (Biasiotti & Nannucci, 2004; Grönlund, 2003; Hoff, Tops, & Horrocks, 2000; Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002). Thus I argue there is a need to focus on the connection between the overall objectives on what to achieve by E-Democracy project and the technology involved, to increase our understanding on consequences by developing ICT-based E-Democracy services.

Experiences from a case study (Rose & Sæbø, 2005) identified two challenges related to the subjects presented above. First, the purpose of the E-Democracy project was poorly understood and not shared between major stakeholders in the projects. The project group apparently took for granted that underlying conceptions of democracy were shared and well-understood, but the analysis showed that this was not the case (Rose & Sæbø, 2005). The main problem could broadly be described as a conflict of interest between major stakeholder groups. Thus the first challenge that arose from the case was to identify major objectives for E-Democracy projects.

Second, the connection between the purpose of the project and the communication patterns was not clear. The analysis identified different communication patterns supported by different stakeholders. Only minor numbers of the contributions serve both citizens and politicians. I therefore question to what extent the design of the artifact (the discussion forum) was able to respond to the purpose for the project. Thus the second challenge identified from the case was to enact the objectives identified with technological forms to develop in E-Democracy projects.

To address these challenges I develop a process for managing concept development in E-Democracy projects. The process is based on three major strands of research. To address the first challenge; identifying different purposes, I investigated the theory on democracy models. This theory introduces coherent presentations of different democracy forms and their characteristics (see e.g. (Bellamy, 2000; Held, 1996; Lively, 1975)). By introducing four E-democracy models (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming) different expectations, motivations and interests can be identified and investigated. The second challenge; how to enact the objectives with technology, is addressed by bridging theories on democracy models, genre of communication, and IT artifacts. As I will illustrate, the bridging between these theories allows learning and reflection on how to enact objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy projects.

The suggested process has two major phases. First objectives for the E-Democracy projects could be identified. Second genres supporting these objectives can be discussed. The process responds to the criticized approach of concentrating on technology first and foremost without focusing on strategies and purposes (Grönlund, 2003; Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Ranerup, 2000; Tops, Horrocks, & Hoff, 2000).

In the following I will present the theoretical background for the suggested process. Then the process is introduced, before I discuss implications and further research opportunities based on the suggested process and briefly conclude.

Theoretical background

E-democracy models

To address the challenge of poorly understood purposes in E-Democracy projects the models of Democracy were investigated. The democracy models represent a common way of characterizing different forms of democracy. Theories on democracy models (Held, 1996; Lively, 1975; Van Dijk, 2000) uses varying characteristics in order to clarify differences among democracy ideas, making a detailed comparison of the competing models difficult. A review of this literature conducted by Päivärinta and Sæbø (Forthcoming) suggest a simplified comparison of various E-democracy models based on two fundamental characteristics: inclusion in decisions and control of the agenda (Dahl, 1989). Inclusion refers to the idea whether all adults belonging to a society are able to participate in current debates and decision-making processes. Control of the agenda is related to the issue of who decides what should be decided on, especially whether the citizens are able to raise issues and provide actively in decisions making as their needs emerge. Four models of E-Democracy was introduced (table 1). The models' main characteristics are presented, allowing for comparison of different empirical situations or stakeholder perceptions. The E-democracy models form the theoretical base for the first step in my proposed process.

	Partisan Democracy	Direct Democracy
Citizens set the agenda	Citizens express bottom-up opinions and critique on existing power structures. No explicit connection to the existing governmental or political decision-making processes is defined beforehand. Citizens set the agenda for public discussions, but not for decision-making. ICT seeks to obtain visibility for alternative political expressions uninterrupted by the political elite.	Citizens participate directly in decision-making processes. The citizens are online affecting the decisions to be made (mostly at the local level). Citizens set the agenda for both public discussion and decision-making. ICT is a crucial pre-condition for democracy to support coordination among decision makers.
	Liberal Democracy	**Deliberative Democracy**
Government (politicians and officers) set(s) the agenda	Government serves citizens who participate in elections and related debates. Government would like to inform and be informed by the citizens. There is no clear connection to the decision-making activities. ICT seeks to improve the amount and quality on information exchange between government and citizens.	E-Democracy projects are used for targeted purposes involving citizens in public decision-making processes. The citizens have a good reason to expect that their voices are heard concerning a particular matter. ICT is developed for increased citizen participation and involvement in decision-making processes.
	Citizens mainly implicitly included in decision making processes	*Citizens have an explicitly defined role in decision making processes*

Table 1. Models of E-Democracy (based on (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming)

Communication Genres for E-Democracy

To address the problem of connecting objectives to ICT in E-Democracy projects I draw on knowledge of IT artifacts, genre of communication theories and the E-democracy models (described above). First, various objectives for E-Democracy projects could to be identified by the four E-democracy models. Second, the communication genre perspective is introduced. The genre perspective has already been used by others to investigate communication patterns and had also showed a promising potential to identify various communication patterns in the study conducted by Rose and Sæbø (2005). Third, knowledge on the technology itself can be found in the research strand of IT artifacts.

The IT artifact

The IT artifact - the core subject matter of the field of Information Systems (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001) - can be conceptualized in several ways. Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) define IT-artifacts as " Those bundles of material and cultural properties packaged in some socially recognizable form such as hardware and software" (p. 121). What features to include is dependent on different views on the IT-artifact (proxy, tool, ensemble, computational or nominal). Benbasat and Zmud (2003) define IT-artifacts as: " the application to enable or support some task(s) embedded within a structure(s) that itself is embedded within a context(s)" (p. 186). By looking at the IT artifact from an ensemble view, the technology is "only one element in a "package," which also includes the components required to apply that technical artifact to some socio-economic activity" (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001, p. 125). To address the IT artifact and it's premises, there is a need to focus on "technologies with

distinctive cultural and computational capabilities, existing in various social, historical, and institutional contexts" (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001, p. 131) focusing on structure(s) and context(s).

Both Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) and Benbasat and Zmud (2003) add general comments on the need for increased focus on IT artifact, yet how to address the IT artifact in specific research areas is not clear. To address the IT artifact in the E-Democracy research area I draw upon the communication genre perspective.

The genre of communication perspective

The genre perspective is one way of studying the emergence of new media or sub-media (Ihlström, 2004). Genre reflects communicative purposes and are characterized in various ways (Ihlström, 2004). In general, genre of communication is characterized by socially recognized *substance* and common characteristics of *form(s)* of a recurrent communicative action type identified in a community (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992). *Substance* refers to social motives, such as the purpose of the communication (Honkaranta, 2003). *Form* of a genre refers to the physical and linguistic features like layout, language and media used (Honkaranta, 2003; Yates & Orlikowski, 1992).

The *form* (from the genre perspective) addresses the technology itself (the inner circle in figure 1 below). The *substance* element of the genre reflect Orlikowski and Iacono's (2001) ensemble view of IT-artifacts, where the technology is seen to be embedded in tasks and structures. Thus the genre perspective combines form and substance (the task and structure part of the IT artifact) to address the IT-artifacts by an ensemble view.

IT-artifacts are also embedded in contexts. The E-democracy models characterize different democracy forms and identify overall objectives. I argue that for E-Democracy projects the contextual settings can be identified from the introduced E-democracy models. Thus genre analysis, combined with the E-democracy models, provides a conceptual tool to capture both characterizations of the IT artifact in itself and the context(s), structure(s) and task(s) of its use. Figure 1 illustrates how the genre perspective and the models of E-Democracy constitute the Ensemble view of IT-artifacts in the E-Democracy field.
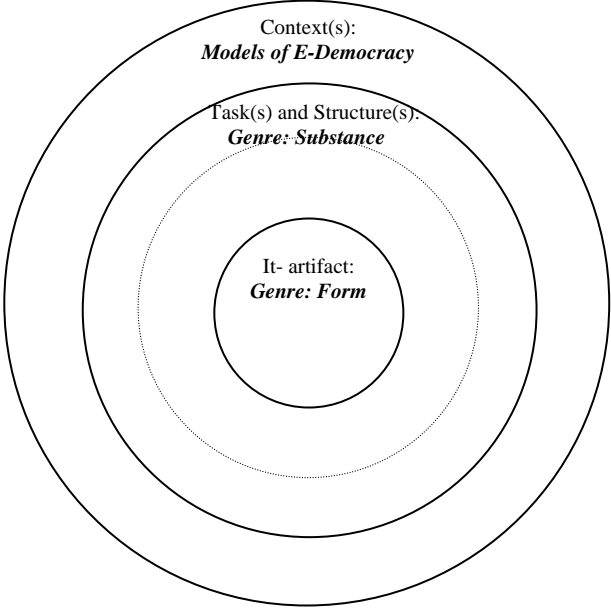

Figure 1. An ensemble view of IT-artifacts encompassing E-Democracy (based on (Benbasat & Zmud, 2003))

Based on the suggested approach Sæbø and Päivärinta (Forthcoming) identified genres from projects and initiatives reported in the E-Democracy research literature (table 2).

Form	Substance
Liberal Democracy	
Discussion forums	Information exchange between stakeholders without a clear connection to decision-
Dialogue system	Citizens express their views as input to decisions made by politicians
Information broadcasting	Bring information from politicians to citizens
Governmental homepages	Inform citizens about timely issues
E-Debates between candidates	Broadcast debates between politicians
Information portals	One stop access point for information achievements
Consultation	Government/ politicians responds to citizen's questions
Candidate or campaigning websites	Promote a candidate or a case
Web Blogs	Broadcast politician's view
Deliberative Democracy	
Discussion forum (issue-based), E-	Initiating, drafting and defining political issues
Dialogue system	Citizens express suggestions and ideas of issues
Invitation to submit suggestions	Citizens submit suggestions
(e-) Referendum	Inform decision-makers about citizens' view on a particular issue
Homepages	Inform and educate citizens about timely issues
On-line transmissions of meetings	Broadcast meeting for more transparent decision making
Citizen panel / "jury"	Getting information from a sample of citizens concerning an issue
On-line questionnaire / Survey	Getting opinions from citizens on particular issue
E-voting / Membership ballot	Getting opinions from citizens / members of a community on particular issues
"Your question"	Citizens ask questions to politicians
Public opinion messages	Citizens express their opinions
Real-time chat, Group-to-group chat	Citizens and politicians discuss about issues
Closed discussion forum	Party members can affect opinion within a party
Expert panel	Choosing appropriate background documentation for a targeted debate
Formal consultation report	Collecting viewpoints from targeted debate to decision-makers
Feedback about targeted discussions	Informing discussants how the discussion affects the decisions
Direct Democracy	
User Registration	To get rights to act in the community
Open discussion/ idea forum	Raise new issues by the citizens and discuss about them
Decision-making on issues to be	Decide, which issues are to be debated and voted further
Targeted debate forums	Discuss about issues rose for formal discussion
Background documentation	Inform users about timely issues and decisions taken
E-Voting	Decide on how to act
Information about the party	FAQ, history, organization
Partisan Democracy	
Discussion forum	Channel for expressing opinions with little or no visibility under the prevailing
Chat system	Synchronous system for short messages
Information Portals	Provide either information on a particular view or as much neutral information as
Newsgroups/Usenet groups	Asynchronous discussions, allow longer threads when messages are not in real time
Mail-based discussions	Asynchronous, introducing push-technology by sending mails to participants
Web Blogs	Broadcast citizen's view

Table 2. Communication genres for different democracy models (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming)

Table 2 illustrates how a communication channels (like discussion forums) support different democracy models. A study made by Päivärinta and Sæbø (2005b) identifies how discussion forums for different democracy models shows different characteristics and therefore can be meaningfully used in relation to several models of Democracy. The study concluded by claiming that "it is not sufficient to speak of a particular medium as such, but the genre-

related issues are needed for clarifying particular uses of technology for E-Democracy in a particularly context" (Päivärinta & Sæbø, 2005b, p. 194).

A process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy initiatives

Based on the theories presented above I suggest a process with two major phases.

Phase 1: Identifying the purpose of the projects

The first phase concentrates on identifying objectives for the forthcoming projects. Three main activities are suggested. First, major stakeholders for the project should be identified. Involving major stakeholder throughout the whole process can improve projects (Flak & Rose, 2005). The project initiators could be responsible for identifying major stakeholders. Second, analyses should be conducted by the stakeholders on main objectives for the forthcoming E-Democracy project. Reflections on different E-democracy models allow for positioning different stakeholder views on main objectives. Third, divergent ideas should be discussed by major stakeholders to agree on what to focus on and to identify areas where consensus between major stakeholders for the projects is not achievable. Table 3 presents major steps for phase one of this process.

Steps	Participants	Outcome	Suggested tools	Relation to theory
Identifying major stakeholders	Project initiators	A list of major stakeholders to include in the process.	Interviews Mapping techniques Workshops	A precondition, no direct connection to the theories involved.
Analyzing objectives and purposes	Stakeholders for the project	Stakeholders' objectives are identified.	Interviews Workshops Surveys	Individuals' objectives are identified according to the four democracy models (table 1)
Consensus-building on main objectives	Stakeholders for the project	Common understanding of objectives in the project.	Workshops Scenario building Interviews	Objectives may be agreed upon, supporting one (or several) of the democracy models(table 1)

Table 3. Steps, participants, outcome and suggested tools for the first phase of the process

Phase 2: Enacting identified purposes into suggested technological forms

The second phase concentrates on how to connect E-Democracy genres to the identified objectives. Phase 1 may results in an overview of what E-democracy model(s) to support. The identified E-Democracy genres (table 2) can act as a starting point for the discussion on possible E-Democracy genres supporting the(se) model(s). By for example presenting prototypes, stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on the expected usefulness of different alternatives. Project owners may be in charge of making decisions on what to do and to make a list of potential possibilities and characteristics that should be supported by the forthcoming development process. Table 4 presents suggested activities for phase two of the process.

Steps	Participants	Outcome	Suggested tools	Relation to theory
Identifying technological opportunities	Stakeholders for the project	An overview of different opportunities and reflection on the usefulness of different alternatives.	Prototyping Pilot testing Workshops Interviews	Technological opportunities are identified according to the E-Democracy genres (Table 2) for the agreed democracy model (s)
Developing a prioritized list of objectives and possible genres	Project owners	Prioritized list objectives and potential technological forms to guide the forthcoming development process.	Workshops Interviews	An overview presents the E-democracy models to support connected to suggested E-Democracy genres (Table 2)

Table 4. Steps, participants, outcome and suggested tools for second phase of the process

Discussion

Based on the suggested process any implementation of E-Democracy can be specific about the actual E-democracy model and connected communication genres. These differences could be taken into account by the practitioners who may want to promote a certain kind of E-Democracy. Practitioners can utilize the suggested process to identify first the assumptions of democracy in the development context in question and second the particular genres of communication to be implemented in the system.

The research responds to calls for establishing theoretical grounds for the hitherto scattered field of e-government (Andersen & Henriksen, 2005; Grönlund, 2004), focusing on the issue of E-Democracy. By the suggested process E-Democracy researchers can be specific in relation to the suggested framework whether the target of his/her research contributes to one particular E-democracy model or a combination of the models. Furthermore, the researcher can be specific when relating new knowledge to the field by identifying genres in light of the process. A new contribution can be identified as a genre instantiation supporting a specific E-democracy model. Through such analyses the researchers can also inform the future practice of E-Democracy, offering lessons learned in a rather detailed manner.

I argue that the suggested process provides a basis for specified, cumulative, and proactive research efforts for E-Democracy, integrating theoretical and empirical literature of the field. However, more efforts need to be directed to further develop a dynamic experience base discussing particular E-Democracy genres, allowing for cumulative knowledge among researchers and practitioners.

Conclusion

In this paper I addressed two identified problems (identifying main objectives and connecting main objectives to technological forms in E-Democracy projects) by introducing a two step process based on three streams of theories. The E-democracy models allow identification and comparison of main objectives in the first phase of the process, while the bridging of knowledge on IT artifacts, genre of communication theories and the E-democracy models connect the identified objectives with technological forms in the second phase.

The process provides guidance to practice by identifying first assumptions of democracy and second the particular technological forms to be implemented in the system, being explicit on democratic communication and decision-making processes. More research is needed to further explore and explain the ideas of communication genres when new ICT and communication preferences are introduced, offering new opportunities for E-Democracy projects.

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How to identify objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy projects; learning from an action case study

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Abstract.
An increased number of public organisations engage in E-Democracy projects to improve their capability to communicate on democratic issues. Such efforts are complex due to lack of knowledge on how to develop information technology solutions to support the complex nature of the electronic communication taking place. In this paper I propose a process for identifying the objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy projects addressing two major problems identified from the E-Democracy literature and a case study. Firstly, the purposes of E-Democracy projects are often unclear and somewhat naïvely understood. Secondly, it seemed difficult to enact technology to achieve the identified objectives. This paper first describes the suggested process and then focus on experiences from an action case study allowing learning and reflection on the process. The opportunity to immediately link main ideas (phase 1) and communication genres (phase 2) showed importance in the discussion about what to develop. Introducing E-democracy models simplified a comparison between alternatives and initiated a discussion on the objectives before focusing directly on technology, which is found to be a weakness in other E-Democracy projects.

Introduction

E-Democracy refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in political debates and decision-making processes, complementing or contrasting traditional means of communication. The idea of democracy leans fundamentally on effective communication and informed decision-making about public issues among citizens, politicians, officers and other stakeholders who may relate to the decisions (Habermas, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000). There is a need to address the connection between ICT and the electronic communication taking place in E-Democracy projects in more detail (Smith, 2000; Steyaert, 2000).

Experiences from a case study (Rose & Sæbø, 2005) identified two challenges related to the subjects presented above. First, the purpose of the E-Democracy project was poorly understood and not shared among major stakeholders in the project. The main objectives were not clear. Second, the connection between the objectives and the technological forms were unclear. To address these challenges, a process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy projects are suggested (Sæbø, Forthcoming). Introducing four E-democracy models (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming) permits different expectations, motivations, and interests to be identified and investigated. The second challenge — how to enact the objectives to information technology — is addressed by linking knowledge on E-democracy models, Genre of communication and IT artefacts (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming). In this paper the process is first briefly described (see (Sæbø, Forthcoming) for more details on the suggested process). Then I focus on a action case study which was based on the suggested process. The action case study allows learning and reflection on the suggested process. I argue the action case study illustrate the use and usefulness of introducing the process in the initiation of a new E-Democracy project.

Theoretical background

The first problem, how to identify main objectives in E-Democracy projects (Rose & Sæbø, 2005), arose from analyses based on a democracy model framework (Bellamy, 2000). The democracy model framework showed a promising potential to explain differences between different stakeholders. A democracy model describes a stereotypical form of democracy and outlines how it operates in practice. The democracy model framework shows potential for being a good candidate to explain and frame future research needed to identify different objectives in E-Democracy projects

Literature on democratic models (Held, 1996; Lively, 1975; Van Dijk, 2000) uses varying characteristics to clarify differences among democratic ideas, making a detailed comparison of the competing models difficult. A review of this literature conducted by Päivärinta and Sæbø (Forthcoming) suggest a simplified comparison of various E-democracy models based on two fundamental characteristics: inclusion in decisions and control of the agenda (Dahl, 1989). Inclusion refers to whether all adults belonging to a society are able to participate in current debates and decision-making processes. Control of the agenda is related to the issue of who decides what should be discussed and decided in the first place.

	Partisan E-Democracy	**Direct E-Democracy**
Citizens set the agenda	Citizens express bottom-up opinions and critique on existing power structures. No explicit connection to the existing governmental or political decision-making processes is defined beforehand. Citizens set the agenda for public discussions but not for decision-making. ICT is introduced to obtain visibility for alternative political expressions uninterrupted by the political elite.	Citizens participate directly in decision-making processes. The citizens online affect the decisions to be made (mostly at the local level). Citizens set the agenda both for public discussion and decision-making. ICT is a crucial pre-condition for democracy to support coordination among decision-makers.
	Liberal E-Democracy	**Deliberative E-Democracy**
Government (politicians and officers) set(s) the agenda	Government serves citizens who participate in elections and related debates. Government would like to inform and be informed by the citizens without a clear connection to the decision-making process. ICT is introduced to improve the amount and quality of information exchange between government and citizens.	E-Democracy projects are used for targeted purposes involving citizens in the public decision-making processes. The citizens have a good reason to expect that their voices be heard concerning a particular matter. ICT is developed for increased citizen participation and involvement in the decision-making processes.
	Citizens mainly implicitly included in decision-making processes.	*Citizens have an explicitly defined role in decision-making processes.*

Table 2 Models of E-Democracy (based on (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming))

The second problem, how to link objectives to information technology, is closely related to the first problem. Main objectives for E-Democracy projects can be identified from the suggested E-democracy models. When the main objectives are identified, alternative information technology supporting these objectives should be identified. Knowledge from E-democracy models can then be connected to knowledge from the genre of the communication strands of research. The genre theory is one way of studying the emergence of new media or sub-media (Ihlström, 2004) and is introduced here to explore detailed viewpoints on communication patterns for E-Democracy purposes. Finally, knowledge on information technology needs to be more explicit to the specific technology needed. Theories on IT-artefacts focus on the technology and its connection to tasks, structures and contexts. Knowledge of IT artefacts is connected to knowledge of genres and E-democracy models, and is used to explain the link between main objectives and information technology.

A review based on the link between these three strands of research (Sæbø & Päivärinta, Forthcoming) identified technological forms for E-democracy models, introduced in table 2.

Form	Substance
Partisan Democracy	
Discussion forum	Channel for expressing opinions with little or no visibility under the prevailing political system
Chat system	Synchronous system for short messages
Information Portals	Provide either information on a particular view or as much neutral information as possible
Newsgroups/Usenet groups	Asynchronous discussions, allow longer threads when messages are not in real time
Mail-based discussions	Asynchronous, introducing push-technology by sending mail to participants
Weblogs	Broadcast a citizen's view
Liberal Democracy	
Discussion forums	Information exchange among stakeholders without a clear connection to decision-making
Dialogue system	Citizens express their views as input to decisions made by politicians
Information broadcasting	Bring information from politicians to citizens
Governmental homepages	Inform citizens about timely issues
E-Debates between candidates	Broadcast debates between politicians
Information portals	One-stop access point for information achievements
Consultation	Government/politicians respond to citizen's questions
Candidate or campaigning websites	Promote a candidate or a case
Weblogs	Broadcast a politician's view
Deliberative Democracy	
Discussion forum (issue-based), E-Docket	Initiating, drafting, and defining political issues
Dialogue system	Citizens express suggestions and ideas of issues
Invitation to submit suggestions	Citizens submit suggestions
(e-) Referendum	Inform decision-makers about citizens' view on a particular issue
Homepages	Inform and educate citizens about timely issues
On-line transmissions of meetings	Broadcast meeting for more transparent decision-making
Citizen panel/"jury"	Getting information from a sample of citizens concerning an issue
On-line questionnaire/Survey	Getting opinions from citizens on particular issue
E-voting/Membership ballot	Getting opinions from citizens/members of a community on particular issues
"Your question"	Citizens ask questions to politicians
Public opinion messages	Citizens express their opinions
Real-time chat, Group-to-group chat	Citizens and politicians discuss issues
Closed discussion forum	Party members can affect opinion within a party
Expert panel	Choosing appropriate background documentation for a targeted debate
Formal consultation report	Collecting viewpoints from targeted debate for decision-makers
Feedback about targeted discussions	Informing discussion participants how the discussion affects the decisions
Direct Democracy	
User Registration	To get rights to act in the community
Open discussion/idea forum	Citizens raise new issues and discuss them
Decision-making on issues to be debated	Decide which issues are to be debated and voted on further
Targeted debate forums	Discuss issues proposed for formal discussion
Background documentation	Inform users about timely issues and decisions taken
E-Voting	Decide how to act
Information about the party	FAQ, history, organization

Table 2. Communication genres for different democracy models

A process for identifying objectives and technological forms in E-Democracy projects

The suggested process (Sæbø, Forthcoming) has two major phases addressing the major challenges. The main idea is firstly to address the objectives for the projects and secondly to enact technological forms. The process addresses the criticised approach of concentrating on technology first without identifying strategies and purposes (Grönlund, 2003; Olsson, Sandstrom, & Dahlgren, 2003; Ranerup, 2000; Tops, Horrocks, & Hoff, 2000)

The first phase concentrates on identifying objectives for the forthcoming projects. The second phase concentrates on how to enact technology to meet the identified objectives. Phase 1 results in an overview on what democracy model(s) to support. The identified technological

forms (table 2) act as a starting point for the discussion on how to enact technology. Table 4 presents suggested activities for the enactment phase of the process.

Steps	Participants	Outcomes	Suggested tools	Relation to theory
Phase 1: Identifying the purpose of the project				
Identifying major stakeholders	Project initiators	An overview of stakeholders to include in the process.	• Interviews • Mapping techniques • Workshops	• *Precondition, no direct connection to the theories involved.*
Analysing objectives and purposes	Stakeholders	Stakeholder's objectives are identified.	• Interviews • Workshops • Surveys	• Individuals' objectives are identified according to the four democracy models (table 1)
Consensus- building on main objectives	Stakeholders	Common understanding of objectives in the project.	• Workshops • Scenario building • Interviews	• Objectives are agreed on supporting one (or several) of the democracy models (table 1).
Phase 2: Enacting identified purposes into suggested technological forms				
Steps	**Participants**	**Outcomes**	**Suggested tools**	**Relation to theory**
Identifying technological opportunities	Stakeholders	An overview of different opportunities and reflection on the usefulness of different alternatives.	• Prototyping • Pilot testing • Workshops • Interviews	• Technological opportunities are identified according to the technological forms (table 2) for the specified democracy model(s)
Developing a list of objectives and technological forms.	Project owners	Prioritized list objectives and potential technological forms to guide the forthcoming development process.	• Workshops • Interviews	• An overview presenting the democracy models to support (table 1) connected to suggested technological forms (table 2)

Table 3. Steps, participants, outcomes and suggested tools for the process

Exploring the suggested process in an action case study

To achieve experience with the suggested process, I conducted an action case study in Kristiansand, a local municipality in Norway. The municipality decided to focus on the "Internet as a facilitator for increased political participation". The committee describes Kristiansand as a municipality focusing explicitly on openness and dialogue.

To explore the process in a real-life context, an action case study was conducted. Braa and Vidgen (Braa, 1995) characterise an action case as "action components [that] reflect the potential for research to change organizations, resulting in changes to the social world. The case component reflects the understanding of findings in an organizational context". Thus, action case studies are characterised by (Braa, 1995): short duration time, interventions in real-time, inclusion of case study elements to support understanding of the domain, emphasis on small (quasi)-experiments in real life-settings, reduced complexity, and focus on changes in a small scale. The action case approach makes a good candidate for exploring the suggested process in a small-scale study. Where an in-depth case study focuses mainly on understanding by interpretation, an action case approach represents more a hybrid between understanding and change (Vidgen & Braa, 1997). The action case study is a small experiment accomplished to reflect on the suggested process.

My data sources include dialogues with major stakeholders, project documents, e-mail correspondences, and minutes from project meetings. Ten persons indicated by the executive officer in the project as holding key roles related to the forthcoming E-Democracy project were investigated. Six of them are politicians and four are employees in the public administration.

Results

The intervention took the following two phases (table 4).

Phase 1: Identifying the purpose of the project					
Steps	**Participants**	**Outcomes**	**Tools**	**Relation to theory**	**Comments**
Identifying major stakeholders	Stakeholders appointed by the executive officer.	Twelve stakeholders identified: six politicians and six staff personnel.	• E-mail correspondence • • Dialogue (by the executive officer	*Precondition, no direct connection to the theories involved.*	Two of the staff personnel were not available for involvement in the project.
Analysing objectives	10 stakeholders	Stakeholder's objectives identified.	Dialogue	Support for Liberal and Deliberative democracy models identified	
Consensus- building on objectives	*10 stakeholders*	*(Not achieved in the action case)*	*No activity took place*	*No activity took place*	*No plenary activities took place, so the consensus building was mainly ignored.*
Phase 2: Enacting identified purposes into suggested technological forms					
Identifying technological opportunities	10 Stakeholders	Individuals' ideas on the use and usefulness of different technological opportunities	Dialogue	Technological forms supporting Liberal and Deliberative democracy models identified.	Opportunities discussed with each individual.
Developing a list of objectives and potential technological forms.	Researcher	Temporary list of opportunities	Researcher's analysis	Main objectives and suggested genres presented (table 6).	The task is conducted by the researcher involved

Table 4. Steps conducted in the action case study

Analysis phase 1: the objectives for the project

The first step — identifying major stakeholders — was conducted by the executive officer in the project. She appointed stakeholders based on their role in the project, earlier experiences on E-Democracy projects, and their availability for participation in the research project. The second step, analysing objectives, focused on the four different democracy models presented in table 1. The discussion surrounding the models was significant as participants began to reflect on the purposes of the project, but also on advantages and challenges for the different democracy models. Discussing the Partisan democracy model participants commented:

• *Partisan democracy is not for us; it is not the municipality's concern.*

• *It is easy to get into an educator-role and disrupt the idea by becoming the initiator.*

• *You'll risk stealing the show if the municipality is interrupting (in Partisan democracies).… If the municipality interacts, don't you end up in another model?*

• *Is this the politician's concern? Isn't the main concern for the press and media?*

• *In Partisan democracy different organizations or stakeholder groups have the main responsibility. But I can't work as the responsible editor in the municipality if the responsibility is given away in that respect.*

• *Those who would like to go into action have to do it themselves. And everyone is able to develop a web-page if needed.*

Key learning. The participants added only minor support for the Partisan democracy model. They did not consider supporting Partisan democracy as the municipality's main responsibility. The participants are also worried about interrupting a free political discussion. The model as such is not seen as irrelevant, but it should be developed and maintained by actors outside the municipality, such as media and other stakeholder groups. On the Direct democracy model participants commented:

• *If you had small responsible units with money to spend, you might have had direct or deliberative democracy. But I don't believe in it, the representative democracy still needs to be the main model.*

• *In direct democracy, single subjects will obtain too much space. You'll lose the comprehensive overview needed in a democracy.*

• *Referendums require clear answers, yes or no or at least clear alternatives. And that is not the case in our society.*

- *A local area might vote on a specific topic, I don't disagree with that. In practice, on rare occasions a topic affects only a defined local area.*

- *Referendum is very difficult, almost impossible, to organise traditionally. It has to be on rare occasions and on specific topics.*

- *… (Direct democracy) costs a lot of money. And better decision-making is not to be achieved either.*

- *Referendum by Internet comes to a new opportunity. Maybe we can perform referendums easier, by voting for or against road tolls. But I don't accept a referendum for or against immigration, which is based on values I don't discuss. It is more a fight against selfishness we all have and is therefore more difficult.*

- *Referendums should be performed on major principal subjects. Electors have to know the opportunities and live with the consequences. By referendums, the people's will is represented, then politicians have to arrange their action according to it.*

Key learning. The Direct democracy model also achieved only minor support. A missing tradition for referendums and high costs are seen as obstacles for Direct democracy, but most important is the absence of clear alternative answers to many questions in a modern democracy. Referendums are not considered (by most of the participants) to interact sufficiently with the complexity needed. The Internet may decrease the costs needed to perform referendums, but it does not change the challenge of achieving involvement by citizens. On the Liberal democracy model, participants commented:

- *Liberal democracy is unproblematic. It's a question on getting information in and out; the challenge then is the quality control on the information.*

- *I wish we had a huge element of Liberal as well as Deliberative democracy.*

- *I'm not sure if the decisions must always, at least in superior cases, be made by the county council. It is the only agency having the opportunity to keep a holistic view on the municipality, being willing to make painful decisions prioritizing one subject over another. I can't really see how that changes by the influence of Deliberative democracy.*

- *By the end of the day, politicians are making the decisions. Citizens are only adding contributions in the processes.*

- *The citizens' main contribution is to add good advice…. If there are many contributions concerning a subject, it's a sign of the importance of that subject, it's like taking the heat on citizens' concerns.*

- *I really don't know what a discussion forum should be except for securing publicity on single topics. It would have been interesting if some politicians stepped forward and said what they meant, but also what they wasn't sure of — please come and influence me! — that someone really asked to be influenced. But then they really have to be serious, to let themselves be influenced. The problem in politics is that opinions are rarely individual; they are commonly decided for a party group.*

- *What's important for me as a decision-maker is to get as many contributions as possible, a wide range of viewpoints so that I can sort out the best and decide what to use later in the process.*

Key learning. Liberal Democracy achieved support from many participants. The Liberal democratic idea of achieving more information without influencing the way decision-making is performed is seen as unproblematic by most of the participants. No promises are made on some kind of direct influence by citizens' participation. The Liberal model combines the opportunity to get input with the traditional representative democracy and is therefore seen by many as the only realistic opportunity. On the Deliberative democracy model, participants commented:

- *We need to strive for Deliberative democracy where it is possible. I can't see any other opportunity on the decreasing participation we now explore.*

- *I believe politicians would like to stay in the Liberal quadrant, being able to claim a comprehensive communication with the target group, but still making all the decisions themselves. That would not be very popular. To succeed, I think we need to get to the two models here (Direct and Deliberative Democracy). People don't want to engage without any influence. Then we fool them.*

- *I would like to see a shift from Liberal democracy towards more Deliberative democracy, in any case in a municipality like Kristiansand working exactly on such challenges.*

- *I think we should work more in the direction of Deliberative democracy, where it is possible. I can't see any other opportunity except the absence of Democracy, which may be present in general in our society.*

- *I would like politicians to give away some power on single topics, where it is possible. Sometimes you ask on stages where the opportunity to influence is absent, where inputs are only a finery. Then I think it's better not to ask.*

- *We have to go for the Deliberative model in the future. The party politics engage fewer and fewer people, so we have to develop new ways for citizens to influence and maintain the democracy.*

- *In an ideal world, the Deliberative model is the one to develop. But politicians are seeking power, that's why they become politicians. They would like to be seen as democratic, listening to others and so on, but I think there are some stable decision-oriented structures in the politicians that are difficult to change.*

Key learning. The Deliberative democracy is by many seemed as an ideal model to support. Two main concerns are discussed. Firstly, the tension between the model and the politicians' will to really be influenced by citizens is highlighted. If politicians are not willing to be influenced, solutions supporting Deliberative democracy should not be developed. Secondly, Deliberative democracy is by some seen as the only way to engage citizens. Citizens would like more than just the opportunity to speak; they are considered to look for some real influence.

The third step — Consensus-building on objectives and purposes — was not achieved in the action case study. The action case study faced restricted resources that did not allow consensus-building activities as part of the first stage, as suggested in the process (Table 3). The second stage is therefore based on individual views of how to enact technological forms with different models of democracy.

Analysis phase 2: enact objectives into suggested technological forms

The analysis in stage 1 identified support for two models — the Liberal and the Deliberative. On identifying technological opportunities in the Liberal democracy model, participants commented:

- *You may develop layers of information on a web-page, including history, alternatives, and choices. The problem now is that the information is hard to get because of the complexity and tone in public documents. So technology may be used to introduce different topics more briefly and add links to more information on each subject.*

- *Instead of raising your hand and asking questions, people could send in their questions via sms', a communication form they actually know. Then it becomes like the TV-channels, with a window on the screen continually including new messages showing what the youth are engaged in.*

- *We would like to go for radio transmission from the county council meetings... Radio transmission seems to work perfectly well. The representatives do not seem to be interrupted at all. Examples in which politicians are videotaped illustrate how they became stiff in front of a camera.*

- *We need to develop a question and answer kind of service. But my hypothesis is that sending in an enquiry to a politician or a party office without getting a response feels like a slap in your face.*

- *We are currently redesigning an information portal. I believe the design of the portal will have great influence on the extent to which people would like to visit the page again.*

- *Many people retrieve information by e-mail who would not have the information elsewhere. I send out newsletters by e-mail to 30–40 people who, without e-mail, would have no opportunity to receive this information. It's extremely efficient.*

- *Personally I would like to have a blog where I write some thoughts about what I as a politician am doing right now. That would be great.*

- *We have discussed the opportunity to broadcast meetings with the opportunity to get instant feedback from*

citizens by having a computer on the table. I think it will be too demanding for the elected since you have to be very concentrated to participate in a debate. It will become too intense.

- *What is important in a Liberal democracy is the municipality's home page. Personally, I utilise the web to find old subjects and minutes, which I find very convenient.*

Key learning. Technological forms for Liberal democracy focus on information exchange. The Internet is seen to enable a simplified presentation of information. Some of the participants find the governance-centric presentation of information to be a major obstacle to citizen participation. The Internet's opportunity to host citizen-centric information channels is therefore seen as important. Other important issues highlighted are how to design the web-page, the efficiency of information distribution by e-mail or by blog, and the importance of offering communication channels that are known by the users. On enacting technological forms into the Deliberative democracy model, participants commented:

- *The only definite idea I have is the opportunity to make a closer connection between the Political Agenda (an archive of minutes and calendar of political meetings) where you'll find all the information needed and a discussion forum where you can take part in a discussion you are interested in. The integration between such services needs to be as tight as possible.*

- *In our party, we have an internet-part, an intranet-part, a closed internal discussion forum and an extra-net part for the national level. On the local level, we have continually ongoing communication among members, mainly based on e-mail. We would like to have the same communication with citizens, but have not yet either the priority nor the capability to include citizens as well.*

- *E-based debates between candidates are interesting, so far mostly utilised internally in the party. But they are utilised more and more by committees in the municipality.*

- *What are needed are simultaneous discussions taking place here and now, allowing for follow-up questions if needed. Without including such a service, our dialogue is useless. Dialogue is here and now. If I add a contribution to a politician, I also expect a quick answer. 10 minutes are ok, there might be more than me contributing, but 48 hours is not ok. For me, the Internet is nearly simultaneous.*

- *I find chat most convenient for deliberative democracy because you are then able to really discuss.*

Key learning. Comments on how to enact Deliberative democracy focused much more on discussion than on information exchange. Participants also commented on the importance of simultaneous communication patterns if real discussions are to be supported.

The prioritised list of opportunities is developed by the researcher and was not discussed by the project owners. The analysis (table 5) is based on participants' support for two different models, the Liberal and the Deliberative.

Partisan Democracy	Direct Democracy
Restricted support from the participants. The model is not considered to be a main responsibility for the municipality.	*Achieved only restricted support. Challenges such as representativity, costs and complexity of the decisions needed in a democracy are obstacles for utilising a Direct democracy model.*
Liberal Democracy	**Deliberative Democracy**
Supported by participants. Unproblematic link between projects and the traditional democratic system. Quality of the information exchange is seen as important. Technological forms are characterised by ease of access, feedback on questions made, and opportunities for information broadcasting. Examples to evaluate further in the project are: • Radio/TV transmission • Question-and-answer services • Information portals • News mail • Blogs • Quality of the municipality's home-page	Supported by participants. Challenging, but also more interesting for citizens than the Liberal model. Opportunities to discuss and influence are seen as important. Technological forms are characterised by the opportunity to discuss, including feedback mechanisms showing the influence of the contributions, and the opportunity to participate in synchronous discussions. Examples to evaluate further in the project are: • Discussion forums • E-mail based discussions • E-Debates between candidates and citizens • Chat

Table 5: Summarized analysis of the action case project

Participants' reflection on the usefulness of the suggested process

The participants were asked to reflect on the perceived usefulness of the suggested process. They commented:

• *I think it is necessary to look at what is needed to succeed. A presentation like this makes it possible to reflect on what is needed instead of just being positive to participate because it (the Internet) is a new way to communicate and therefore worthy by itself.*

• *I believe the models may bring up a lot of interesting ideas from politicians and act as a starting point for a discussion.*

• *It is really helpful to point out which direction this leads us, making visible the alternatives.*

• *An overview like this on different opportunities is a nice tool in a decision-making process on where to go; it's a nice systemisation.*

• *It (the suggested process) is quite solid…. It has to be simplified for practical usefulness.*

• *It (the suggested process) is currently too complicated, but it helps me as an executive officer to better understand different opportunities.*

• *The problem is often that we start up with technical solutions before knowing what we would like to achieve, which I found to be meaningless. You need to look at what to achieve, different alternatives and thereafter choose the technical solution. Politicians need to get different opportunities plainly put, including cost accounting and what's expected from them on different alternatives.*

• *Immediately, it seems interesting to arrange a session for the city council where politicians themselves, based on this process, discuss what they would like to develop, simply a process of increasing awareness on what they like to achieve.*

• *There's a need for even more concretising of different alternatives. What are you achieving by a discussion forum, by a chat system? I don't know.*

• *Now we have this tool identifying opportunities by ICT, of course we have to utilise it (the suggested process) further in the process.*

Key Learning. The suggested process was perceived useful by the participants in the project. This was underscored by the fact that all participants were able to immediately reflect on

different democratic models and technological forms despite only a limited introduction. Participants find the idea of starting with the main purpose before discussing technology to be helpful. The presentation was found by some to be too complicated, but despite this still helpful. Participants address the need for being more concrete about the technology and costs connected to different alternatives.

Discussion

The main objectives of a project are identified by introducing the E-democracy models. The dialogues illustrate the tension between the Liberal and the Deliberative models. Some of the participants discussed the difference between the "realistic and unproblematic" Liberal model, and the "wanted, but much more challenging" Deliberative model. The process opens space for a further discussion focused particularly on these two models and their consequences.

The dialogues explored some strengths of the proposed process. Firstly, the immediate opportunity to link main ideas (phase 1) and communication genres (phase 2) showed the importance of the discussion on what to develop. The objective then became clear before getting near a discussion on technology. The participants were immediately empowered to discuss alternatives and express their viewpoints on what to achieve with the forthcoming project. Secondly, introducing the E-democracy models simplified a comparison among alternatives and initiated a discussion on the objectives before focusing directly on technology, which is found to be a weakness in other E-Democracy projects (Grönlund, 2003; Marcella, Baxter, & Moore, 2002; Rose & Sæbø, 2005). Thirdly, supported by participants' reflections on the usefulness of the process, we argue that the process's connection between overall objectives and technological forms is important for concept development in E-Democracy projects.

Some challenges were also identified. The value of the suggested process may increase by being more definite on consequences, especially by estimating expected resources needed by different alternatives, such as time requirements and required technological competence. Such information is difficult to identify today because of restricted experience in utilising different communication genres in E-Democracy projects. Further research is needed to explore the consequences more in detail to further develop the suggested process.

Based on the suggested process, implementations of E-Democracy can be specific about the actual E-democracy model and technological forms. These differences could be taken into account by practitioners who may want to promote a certain kind of E-Democracy. A practitioner may utilise the suggested process to identify first the assumptions of democracy in the development context in question and then the particular technological forms to be implemented in the system, such as those illustrated by the conducted action case.

By the suggested process, E-Democracy researchers can be specific in relation to the suggested framework whether the target of their research contributes to one particular E-democracy model or a combination of the models. Furthermore, researchers can be specific when relating new knowledge to the field by identifying genres in light of the process. A new contribution can be identified as a genre instantiation supporting a specific E-democracy model. Through such analyses, the researchers can also inform the future practice of E-Democracy, offering lessons learned in a rather detailed manner.

However, more efforts need to be directed to further develop a dynamic experience base discussing particular E-Democracy genres, allowing for the growth of cumulative knowledge

among researchers and practitioners. Particular technological forms should be investigated in more detail to find out more detailed lessons learned, including knowledge of resources needed.

Conclusion

I address the two identified problems (identifying main objectives and how to connect main objectives to technological forms) by introducing a two-step process founded on two theories. The conducted action case explored the process and gained insight on its strengths and challenges. I argue that the process shows importance by connecting main objectives of a project and technological forms. The participants were immediately empowered both to discuss different objectives and to link to technology after only a very brief introduction on the process.

Empirical research on E-Democracy has been a scattered field of experiments lacking solid theoretical foundations, let alone cumulative knowledge to guide research and practice. The suggested process demonstrates how knowledge from established fields of research show importance in the immature area of E-Democracy research. The process provides guidance to practice by identifying firstly assumptions of democracy and secondly the particular technological forms to be implemented in the system, being explicit about democratic communication and decision-making. Relations and contributions to the suggested process by researchers increase the opportunity to establish and develop a cumulative knowledge-base. More research is needed to further explore and explain the ideas of communication genres when new ICT and communication preferences offer new opportunities.

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Appendix B.

Recent theories on democracy models related to the suggested E-democracy models

	democracy models	Main characteristics
Liberal E-Democracy	Liberal and developmental democracy (Held, 1996)	Representative government where citizens are involved via voting, as representatives at the local level and participants in public debate.
	Aggregative democracy (Eriksen & Weigård, 1999),	Politics is a fight between conflicting individual interests. Politicians are responsible for aggregating elector interests as they occur via elections.
	Pluralism democracy (Held, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000)	Competitive electoral system with at least two parties secures government by minorities and political liberty. Citizens have the right to express their ideas, vote and organise.
	Competitive Elitist democracy (Held, 1996)/ Demo elitist democracy (Bellamy, 2000)	Elected parliaments are the basis for the democracy. Experts representing (or claiming to represent) different interests in society act in policy networks. These political experts represent the elite, which are intensively involved in the formation of policy and definition of the public services.
	Legalist democracy (Held, 1996; Van Dijk, 2000)	The majority principle protects individuals from arbitrary governments. Effective political leadership is guided by Liberal principles, and there is a minimum state intervention in civil society and private life.
	Consumer democracy (Bellamy, 2000), Thin democracy (Barber, 1984; Åström, 2001)	The main democratic value resides in the citizen's right to service. The model seeks to re-focus democracy around the efficient provision of public services. Competent consumers need to be well-informed; implying an important role for information and communication systems through which politicians inform citizens.
Deliberative E-Democracy	Participatory democracy (Held, 1996; Pateman, 1970; Van Dijk, 2000)	Equal rights can only be achieved in a participatory society which fosters a sense of political efficacy. A knowledgeable citizenry is capable of taking sustained interest in the governing process. Less power to bureaucracy in favour of more involvement by the citizens.
	Neo-Republican democracy (Bellamy, 2000) / Plebiscitary democracy (Van Dijk, 2000)	Citizens are regarded as active, especially at micro- and local levels. The model has radical assumptions on shared social rights and responsibilities, where revitalization of civic spirit is a central objective. ICT facilitates an increased number of participants, high-quality discussion and social inclusion in decision-making.
	Deliberative democracy (Gimmler, 2001), Strong democracy (Barber, 1984; Åström, 2001)	Highlights the role of open discussion, the importance of citizen participation, and the existence of a well-functioning public sphere.
Partisan E-Democracy		No theoretical contributions identified.
Direct E-Democracy	Classical democracy (Held, 1996)	Citizens had political equality and were free to rule and be ruled in turn. Main decisions were made by all in the assembly with sovereign power. Citizens were admitted to participate in politics focusing on society, not individuals.
	Direct democracy (Held, 1996; Lynne, 2004)/ Cyberdemocracy (Bellamy, 2000)	A radical alternative compared to the traditional democratic institutions and features. Traditional institutions lose power in favour of network-based groups and individuals. ICT no longer represents a supplement to traditional communication channels, emerging as a crucial pre-condition for democracy.
	Libertarian democracy (Van Dijk, 2000), Quick democracy (Barber, 1984; Åström, 2001)	Emphasises the autonomous politics by citizens in their own associations using the horizontal communication capabilities of ICT. Traditional institutions are, in the most extreme application, put aside by politics created in networks.

Appendix B. Recent theories on democracy models related to the suggested E-democracy models