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Inklusion, Exklusion und Digitale Revolution

Konrad Becker, public netbase
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Mehr Demokratie durch elektronische Medien? Wohl kaum. Aber demokratischere Verhältnisse durch Partizipation und emanzipatorischen Einsatz von Medien wäre eine sehr wünschenswerte Entwicklung.

Als Leiter einer Organisation die Zugang zum Internet für Künstler und Kulturschaffende anbietet beschäftige ich mich auch auf einer sehr praktischen Ebene mit der Frage der Partizipation in Informationstechnologie und Kommunikationsnetzwerken.

Das Institut für Neue Kulturtechnologien etablierte Public Netbase als Modell einer Kulturschnittstelle zu neuen Kommunikationstechnologien im Wiener Museumsquartier. Public Netbase ist nicht nur ein Non-Profit ISP und entwickelt Content sondern führt ein umfassendes Veranstaltungs-, Informations- und Trainingsprogramm zum Bereich Kultur und neue Technologien im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Gesellschaft.¹

Public Netbase bildet eine Plattform, in der sich, analog zu den neuen Kommunikationstechnologien, die Grenzen der Kunstformen bereichsübergreifend neu formen und zieht dabei einen historischen Bogen von den Pionieren der neuen Technologien bis zum Diskurs der postindustriellen Gesellschaft. Public Netbase richtet sich dabei nicht nur an ein allgemein kulturell interessiertes Publikum, sondern auch an Jugendliche, für die der Umgang mit Technologie in der Alltagskultur inzwischen selbstverständlich geworden ist.

Die zu erwartenden Veränderungen im Bereich Arbeit und Ökonomie aber auch im täglichen Leben durch den Zunehmenden Einsatz von ICT werden oft mit dem Begriff "Digitale

¹ <http://www.t0.or.at>, <http://mediaspace.t0.or.at>

Revolution" bezeichnet. In Analogie zu den fundamentalen Veränderungen die durch die "Industrielle Revolution" im vorigen Jahrhundert ausgelöst wurden, oder die Effekte der sogenannten "Gutenberg Revolution", ist dieser Begriff geprägt worden um eine Bezeichnung für die rasanten Entwicklungen im Bereich ICT aber auch der Biotechnologie und der zunehmenden Verschmelzung von Mensch und Maschine zu finden.

In diesem Zusammenhang möchte ich auch einige Überlegungen zu den kulturellen Aspekten dieser "Digitalen Revolution", zum kulturellen Erbe der Informationsgesellschaft präsentieren.

Zunächst läßt sich mit Sicherheit davon ausgehen das diese Revolution, diese Umwälzungen, wie immer sie auch benannt werden mögen, tiefgehende Auswirkungen auf das politische Gefüge unserer Gesellschaft und die demokratische Praxis nach sich zieht.

Viele von Ihnen haben wahrscheinlich schon einen Godzilla -Film gesehen. Godzilla, ist als moderne Legende populärer Japanischer Kultur, von Kulturtheoretikern als Metapher für den Modernisierungsschock der Japanischen Gesellschaft, der auch den Ersteinsatz nuklearer Massenvernichtungsmittel beinhaltet, interpretiert worden.

Wenn ich nach einem populären Bild für die Auswirkungen von ICT gefragt würde dann denke ich das der Hollywood Streifen "Deep Impact", noch am ehesten den dramatischen Effekten dieser Entwicklung gerecht wird. Der Film zeigt die Wirkung eines Kometen, der tief in die Erdoberfläche unseres Planeten einschlägt.

Leider sind wir zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt noch immer mit vielen Vertretern der Politik konfrontiert die ICT als futuristisches Spielzeug ansehen, obwohl es zunehmend alle Aspekt unseres Lebens bestimmt- von E-mail bis zu Bankomaten, von Automatisierungs- und Expertensystemen bis hin zu unserem eigenen (Computer) Arbeitsplatz.

All jene Vertreter der Politik die ihre Verantwortung in diesem Bereich nicht erkennen sind die Totengräber der politischen Handlungsfähigkeit in diesem wichtigen Gesellschaftlichen Umbruch.

Die Auswirkungen dieses drastischen Phänomens zu untersuchen ist Gegenstand dieser Diskussionsveranstaltung. und bedauerlicherweise muß ich bei dieser Gelegenheit feststellen das die Perspektiven für eine partizipative Informationsgesellschaft sich äußerst düster darstellen. Politische Freiheit, Gleichheit und Gerechtigkeit werden sich, wenn überhaupt, nicht von Selbst einstellen sondern müssen erkämpft und mit großem Einsatz erarbeitet werden.

Unter dem Titel "An Information Society Devoted to the People" in der Zusammenfassung der G7 Information Society Conference steht (Zitat) "*..the information society is a new, complex and abstract concept and as such it requires considerable effort in promoting public awareness and understanding...*" (Zitatende)²

Das zunehmende Angebot von Service und Informationen staatlicher Stellen, die Einrichtung von öffentlich zugänglichen Online Systemen zur Vereinfachung von Behördenwegen, die Verbesserung der Transparenz von gesetzlichen Regelungen und der Vereinfachte Zugang zu Verwaltungsstellen ist vorderhand sicherlich eine sehr wünschenswerte Entwicklung.

Nicht nur die Wirtschaft sondern auch die öffentliche Verwaltung kann im Sinne einer Kostenersparnis und einer Verschlinkung der Administration davon profitieren.

Dies kann aber keineswegs die demokratiepolitische Verantwortung und den aktuellen Handlungsbedarf an geeigneten Rahmenbedingungen ersetzen.

In einem Land wie Österreich, wo historisch bedingt, zunächst alles verboten scheint was nicht ausdrücklich erlaubt ist und der persönliche Kontakt zu Verwaltungsbeamten oft die notwendige Voraussetzung ist um irgend etwas bewerkstelligen zu können, stellen sich die Vorteile von elektronischer Systemen allerdings etwas differenzierter dar.

Wenn wir die Fragestellungen von Demokratie und elektronischen Medien ernsthaft betrachten wollen, muß notwendigerweise von einem breiter angelegten Verständnis als von Busfahrplänen, Formularen und Parlamentsprotokollen im Internet ausgegangen werden.

² <http://www.ispo.cec.be/g7/g7main.htm>

Auch die in der Einladung zu dieser Veranstaltung erwähnten Abstimmungen per Knopfdruck sind nicht notwendigerweise und von vornherein eine Verbesserung des demokratischen Systems, sondern eröffnen gleichzeitig ungeahnte Möglichkeiten der Manipulation und des Mißbrauchs. Von der kurzfristigen Exploitation emotioneller Reaktionen und Ressentiments bis hin zu Exekutionen "by popular demand" zeigen sich eine Reihe sehr bedenklicher Implikationen.

Wir alle profitieren von der Automatisierung vieler Verwaltungs- und Arbeitsprozesse. Die Meisten von uns wollen auf diese neu gewonnenen Bequemlichkeiten, Dienstleistungen und Arbeitsweisen, die durch elektronische Informationssysteme und vernetzte Computern ermöglicht werden, nicht mehr verzichten.

Dennoch ergeben sich aus dieser Entwicklung problematische Perspektiven und der Eindruck, daß diese Fragen nicht ausreichend in der Öffentlichkeit diskutiert werden, verfestigt sich immer mehr.

Das Spektrum politischer Perspektiven reicht von einer von Manipulation und Desinformation geprägten Telekratie, einem "Big Brother" übertreffenden Szenario totaler Kontrolle, bis zu einer dem Geist der Aufklärung verpflichteten Informationsgesellschaft und neuen Formen einer partizipativen Demokratie.

Lassen Sie mich zunächst einige dieser Szenarios ansprechen:

Neue Technologien gestatten ungeahnte Eingriffe in die Privatsphäre und eine Invasion in die intimsten Bereiche des Individuums.

Security ist eine boomende Industrie, aber das zunehmende Bedürfnis nach totaler Überwachung und Identifizierung steht in Polarität zur Idee der individuellen Autonomie freier Bürger....

- Massen-Dataveillance und allgegenwärtiges Ausspähen durch Softwareagenten, die sich unsichtbar an die Schleimspuren unserer Datenkörper heften.
- Datamining, das Auswerten und Quer-Referenzieren elektronischer Spuren durch Computer- und Datenbanksysteme, ermöglicht zielgenaues "target-lock".

- Smart Cards, Mobiltelefone und alle Formen der elektronischen Interaktion liefern psychologischen Expertenprogrammen die Grundlagen um Persönlichkeitsprofile zu erstellen. Kameras auf den Ein- und Ausfahrtsstrassen grosser Städte lesen die Kennzeichen vorbeifahrender Autos, Gesichtserkennungs-Software wird schon für den Heimgebrauch angeboten... Anwendungen biometrischer Technologien wie elektronische Fingerabdruckererkennung oder das Scannen der Retina drängen in den Markt und treiben die Verknüpfung von Mensch und Maschine weiter voran.

Die diesbezüglichen Gesetze, die zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt in vielen Ländern vorbereitet oder beschlossen werden, stellen einen massiven Angriff auf die Bürgerrechte der Zivilgesellschaft und den Schutz der Privatsphäre dar. Die vorgesehenen oder existierenden Überwachungssysteme, die teilweise unter Ausschluß gerichtlicher und demokratischer Kontrolle laufen, lassen die Zustände in der ehemaligen Soviet Union wie ein unbeschwertes Feriencamp erscheinen. Auf internationaler Ebene sei als Beispiel das Echelon System der Vereinigten Staaten genannt mit dem sich zuletzt auch das Europäische Parlament beschäftigen mußte.

Es hat den Anschein als wären wir eher unterwegs zu einer Surveillance Society, einer Überwachungsgesellschaft als zur Informationsgesellschaft.

Und es sieht so aus als wenn sich Big Brother zur virtuellen Präsenz informationswirtschaftlicher Oligopole transformiert.

Den zahlreichen neuen Formen des Mißbrauchs - vom Cyberrape, dem Angriff auf den Datenkörper, bis hin zu genetischer Diskriminierung wird wenig entgegengesetzt.

Dem Ziel einer offenen und pluralistischen Gesellschaft wird man mit neuartigen Methoden der Zensur und der schrittweisen Einführung des sogenannten "gläsernen Menschen" jedenfalls nicht näherkommen. Nur eine aktive und engagierte Politik und breite Qualifizierungsmaßnahmen können hier neue Lösungsansätze für die Herausforderungen der Informationsgesellschaft erarbeiten. Statt zweifelhafte Lauschangriff und Rasterfahndungsmethoden durchzusetzen, sollten die politischen Dimensionen dieser Entwicklung evaluiert und die mittel- und langfristigen gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen dieser Technologien reflektiert werden.

Während beispielweise auch in Österreich über die Zugänglichkeit von Webseiten amerikanischer Neonazis lamentiert wird vermisse ich ein für jugendliche zugängliches Angebot von edukativen Informationen im Netz das sich mit den Greueln des Nationalsozialismus und seiner Ideologie in einer attraktiven und umfassenden Weise beschäftigt.

Die Spaltung in eine Klassengesellschaft von "Usern" und "Losern", von Information "have" and "have nots" ist nur eines der Probleme die auf uns zukommen.

Die Konkurrenz automatisierter Arbeitsabläufe im white-collar Sektor wird zunehmend wirksam und führt zu einer weiteren Verschlechterung der Situation der Arbeitnehmer.

Vor nicht allzu langer Zeit wurde ihm Zusammenhang mit der Soziologie der Exklusion noch von der 2/3 Gesellschaft als gesprochen. Inzwischen wird mit großer Selbstverständlichkeit von der 1/5 Gesellschaft gesprochen in der nur 20 Prozent der Bevölkerung aktiv in die Produktionsprozesse und die Ökonomie der postindustriellen Informationsgesellschaft eingebunden ist und ein großer Teil der Bevölkerung von einer partizipativen Beteiligung ausgeschlossen ist.

Diese Bevölkerungssegmente werden immer häufiger und in einem sehr sachlichen Ton als Überschußgesellschaft bezeichnet. Nun stellt sich die Frage wie wird man mit diesem sogenannten "Überschuß" umgehen?

Wenn man weiß das die Ursprünge dieser Technologien aus der militärischen Forschung, dem Bereich von Command, Control und Communication stammen, dann ist auch klar das sich diese Technologien hervorragend als Repressionsinstrumente und Waffen in einem low-intensity conflict gegen die Zivilbevölkerung einsetzen lassen.

Es ist sehr zu hoffen das die Geschichte sich in diesem Punkt nicht wiederholt und statt dessen eine Gesellschaftliche Entwicklung in Richtung Bildung, Partizipation und Demokratisierung Platz greifen kann.

Viele Kulturtheoretiker die sich mit diesen Trends beschäftigen warnen eindringlich vor neuen Machteliten und der Hegemonie einer virtuellen Klasse während sich Befürchtungen bezüglich einer weiteren Medienkonzentration zunehmend bestätigen.

Darüber hinaus gibt es eine enorme Kluft in der Verteilung der Informationskanäle auf globaler Ebene zu konstatieren. Die fehlende Balance in den geographischen Informationstrukturen insbesondere gegenüber den Entwicklungsländern und der 3. Welt hat schon Mitte der 80er im Rahmen der UNESCO zum Vorschlag einer "New World Information Order" geführt. Der Wunsch dieses Ungleichgewicht zu thematisieren hat zum die USA und UK unter Reagan und Thatcher zum Austritt aus der UNESCO bewogen und obwohl sich die Brisanz dieses Themas zunehmend verschärft hat sich seither keine nennenswerte öffentliche Diskussion entwickelt.

Die Ausbreitung von Monokulturen und patentiert steriler Hybride der Medienkonzerne, anstatt der Entwicklung einer diversifizierten Wissensvermittlung in gesunden Informationslandschaften bereitet jetzt schon den Boden für die Informationsökologischen Katastrophen von Morgen.

Die Mechanismen der Exklusion in der Informationsgesellschaft kommen auf den vielfältigsten Ebenen zu tragen. Mit den technischen Möglichkeiten des Watermarkings und der digitale Identifikation steigt die Begehrlichkeit der Copyright Industrie und im vermeintlichen Interesse der Autoren läuft eine Kampagne gegen das öffentliche Interesse an Kultur und Bildung. Intellectual Property versus Public Domain wird zu einem Maßstab für die zunehmend proprietären Strukturen digitaler Netze und so selbstverständlich gewordene öffentliche Einrichtungen wie z.B. Bibliotheken sind durch diese Vorgänge in ihrer Existenz gefährdet.

Während sich die technische Machbarkeit immer weiter nach vorne verschiebt ist die öffentliche Diskussion über die langfristigen Auswirkungen dieser Entwicklung keineswegs so fortgeschritten.

Es wird zunehmend deutlicher, das Computer-Kommunikationstechnologien neue Möglichkeiten bieten soziale Beziehungen zu formen und zu beeinflussen.

Medien formen unsere Realität und beeinflussen das kollektive Bewußtsein auf einer Ebene, auf der Veränderungen möglich werden. Darin liegen weitreichende Chancen und Gefahren, die durch die aktive kulturelle Mitgestaltung der weltweiten Datennetze und die Entwicklung allgemeiner Medienkompetenz günstig beeinflußt werden können.

Die zunehmende Komplexität von Informationsstrukturen und der wachsende Bedarf an automatisierten Filterprozessen bringt ein steigendes Potential an Spin, Propaganda, Desinformation und Mißbrauch aller Art. Diese Mechanismen werden durch diese neuen Technologien immer subtiler aber auch immer wirkungsvoller und der einzige Ausweg scheint in Aufklärung und Kompetenzbildung zu liegen.

Medienkompetenz, die sozialen und technischen Fähigkeiten für den täglichen Umgang mit diesen Medien müssen vermittelt werden um dem einzelnen das Notwendige Werkzeug für die Informationsgesellschaft an die Hand zu geben und damit erst eine Voraussetzung für Freiheit, Gleichheit und demokratische Bedingungen sicherzustellen.

Die Homogenisierung der Gesellschaft und die schleichende Entmündigung durch den Transfer von Entscheidungskompetenz zu Expertensystemen und technischen Abläufen bedingt als Gegengewicht die Notwendigkeit zur Stärkung der Zivilgesellschaft durch die emanzipatorische Nutzung neuer Technologien.

Diese Entwicklung nur zu beobachten, ohne zu Handeln, bedeutet die Möglichkeiten der Einflußnahme auf die Gestaltung der Zukunft zu vergebem.

Vor allem Kunst und Kultur können in diesem gesellschaftlichen Umbruch die Rolle von Wegbereitern für neue Inhalte und einen emanzipierten, sozialen Einsatz von Technologie wahrnehmen.

Aus meiner persönlichen Erfahrung wird deutlich, das insbesondere die Kulturschaffenden im Bereich neue Medien eine besondere Sensibilität für die zukünftigen Chancen und Gefahren entwickelt haben.

Zahlreiche Internationale, Nationale und regionale Expertentreffen der letzten Jahre haben bewiesen das es in Europa eine lebendige Szene von Kulturschaffenden gibt welche die soziale und politische Dimension der Neue Medien erkannt hat und gemeinsam versucht den politischen

Entscheidungsträgern Handlungsanleitungen für eine Förderung des demokratischen Potentials im Bereich ICT nahezubringen.

In diesem Zusammenhang zu erwähnen wäre die Amsterdam Agenda der "Practice to Policy" Konferenz 1997³, das Dokument "Networking Centers of Innovation" der "Cultural Competence"⁴ Konferenz 1998, der "European Cultural Backbone"⁵ von Anfang 1999 und auf nationaler Ebene die Netz.Kultur.Österreich Tagung im Dezember 98 oder die Medienkonferenz Mai 99 in Linz.

Der European Cultural Backbone (ECB) ist ein Zusammenschluß von Institutionen im Bereich Kunst und Kommunikationstechnologie der es sich zum Ziel gesetzt hat gemeinsam partizipative Medien zugunsten einer positiven Entwicklung des sozialen Wandels zu nutzen und zu entwickeln. Einer der vorrangigen Aufgaben des ECB ist die Installierung eines Breitband-Datennetzes, eines Backbones, für den Kunst- und Kulturbereich um durch die kulturelle Nutzung neuer Kommunikationstechnologien einen Beitrag zur Ausformung eines lebendigen öffentlichen Lebens in den internationalen Datennetzen zu leisten.

Es hat sich gezeigt das der Kulturbereich hier einen großen Beitrag in der Erforschung und Umsetzung neuer Formen sozialer Interaktion und Beteiligung in digitalen Systemen Partizipation leisten kann.

Um diese gesellschaftlichen Funktionen erfüllen zu können, braucht es aber Bandbreite und Zugang zu digitalen Netzwerken. Eine Grundlage für Kunst und Kultur in der digitalen Domain ist der freie Zugang zu hochqualitativen internationalen Datennetzen. Analog zu den bereits bestehenden universitären Netzen und den im Aufbau befindlichen Schul- und Bildungsnetzen, bedarf es der Einrichtung von Kulturnetzen, eines Cultural Backbone im Internet. Dem Wesen der digitalen Netze entsprechend müssen niedrighschwellige, dezentralisierte Strukturen mit sozialer Durchlässigkeit als Schnittstellen zum emanzipatorischen Gebrauch neuer Informationstechnologien eingerichtet werden.

³ <http://www.dds.nl/~p2p>, http://www.dds.nl/~p2p/p2p_journal/agenda.html

⁴ <http://competence.netbase.org>

⁵ <http://ecb.t0.or.at>

Um diesen Transformationsprozeß aktiv mitgestalten zu können, ist es insbesondere für die Kulturschaffenden wichtig, mediale Kompetenz zu entwickeln und auszubilden und ein kritisches Verständnis vermitteln zu können.

Es geht um mehr als um die Möglichkeit auf einen Knopf zu drücken- sei es Abstimmverhalten oder um einen Einkauf in einer Elektronischen Shoppingmall zu machen. Um die demokratischen Entwicklungspotentiale einer auf elektronischen Produktions- und Informationssystemen beruhenden Gesellschaft hervorzubringen bedarf es einer der gemeinsamen Anstrengung aller gesellschaftlichen Kräfte den öffentlichen Raum in digitalen Netzen sicherzustellen und zu fördern. Nur so kann es zu mehr Demokratie durch elektronische Medien kommen.

Democracy is Online

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Democracies Online: <http://www.e-democracy.org/do>**

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The Internet will save democracy. Or so the early 1990s technohype led many to believe. With each new communication medium comes a wide-eyed view about its potential. I'd like to suggest that just as the television saved democracy, so will the Internet. Now that I've set a low expectation, anything we do incrementally to improve democracy through the Internet is something we can consider an accomplishment. On my speaking trips, I find that journalists in particular like to ask about voting online. I hear questions about the many commercial Web sites that offer instant polling for people to vent their opinions. In time, many countries will leverage electronic commerce to allow people to vote via their preferred technology. In one scenario, citizens will receive ballots in the mail if they have registered as at-home voters. They would then return the ballot through the mail, or use a Touch-Tone telephone leaving their voice signature, or use the unique information on their ballot to vote via the Internet-leaving their digital signature, of course.

Neither the voting technology nor online polling justifies either one's official use by any government. Their technical existence will not bring about more frequent use of referenda or a more direct democracy. The decision to apply technology in official elections will be a difficult political choice. It will have more to do with how those in power feel it will influence voting outcomes than whether the public wants the option. We all have different definitions and experiences of democracy.

Focusing on the Internet and participatory democracy within the context of representative democracy uncovers some exciting developments. The reality is that our many-and quite different-democracies are changing because of the use of information technology and networks. We don't know whether the changes will be for the better or the worse.

The fundamental question we must ask ourselves is, As democracy and the Internet converge, how must we be involved now in order to improve both? The challenge for us, as citizens, is to be engaged in this process of change. We will be engaged through our existing institutions, be they nonprofits, universities, the media, companies, or governments. We will be involved as individuals and through the creation of new, mediating citizen organizations that are of the Internet, not just on it. Focusing on the part of democracy that happens between election days, we are experiencing a convergence of democratic institutions and processes with the Internet. Democracy is online.

The primary democratic sectors that are flooding the Internet with political information are government, the media, and advocacy and political interest groups. The private sector and others in the information technology industry are developing information and communication tools that are used in this arena. Each sector is making a contribution to democracy online.

Government Online

Government online, as it is called, is making democratic information available like never before. Parliaments, legislatures, city councils, and even neighborhood councils are making available lots of laws and proposed laws, meeting agendas and minutes, elected-official contact information, and other reports. The many chapter authors of the G7 Government Online and Democracy White Paper, of which I serve as coeditor, is a sign that governments around the world are entering a new phase of analysis and action to improve their contribution to democracy online. Even though systematizing user-friendly and deep access to government information is an important priority, a few interesting exceptions to the one-way model exist. The Moira Shire Council, in the state of Victoria in Australia, uses a public Web board to allow citizens to submit questions for the council to address during its official question time. The council then summarizes the meeting discussion for release online. In Murphysboro, Illinois, a local Internet service provider (ISP) has partnered with the city council to make live audio available, with a corresponding online chat for citizen-to-citizen interaction during council meetings. The government of Canada maintains an index of the online interactive consultations from a number of its agencies. As will be noted later, evolution toward interaction is essential for full realization of the potential of existing and future Internet tools to promote greater public participation in government. Governments, however, do have a special duty to ensure broad access to formal participatory events. So online interactive events geared toward the general public should complement corresponding opportunities that are available to all regardless of their knowledge of or access to the Internet.

Organizing government information-especially laws, rules, and regulations-into a combined pull-and-push system may represent the ultimate online contribution for participation in governance. Citizens could indicate interest in a certain topic area or a specific law and be actively notified whenever changes are proposed.

This might work well with larger, more sophisticated legislative information systems. Many serious policy questions will arise: Should the government help those indicating interest in the same topics or proposals become aware of each other? To what extent should a democratic information system serve the interest of those who govern versus those who want to influence how they are governed? And how will the Internet public-access infrastructure in libraries, schools, and other locations be part of a democracy network for broader use that includes some training and assistance?

Media Online

Media efforts, especially those of online newspapers and magazines, have made the largest investment in making content available on the Internet-and it shows. It is likely that they receive most of the public Internet traffic from those seeking news and information on the issues and happenings in their democracies. The major scarcity online from a user perspective is time. From an online business perspective it is attention. With attention come the abilities to promote your content, attract banner advertisements, and create opportunities for commerce. In many places the major virtual navigation pathways are consolidating in major Web index, search sites, and more-local sites often tied to major media outlets. It is from these pathways that more and more of the public find the essential editorial service that allow the public to quickly digest political news and commentary. The approaches and contributions of media and major commercial sites to democracy online are incredibly important. How they leverage their audience for their own as well as community partnership efforts puts them in a strong position. For example, the decision to link directly to the full government report within a story encourages deeper understanding, but also sends them away from the media outlet's own site. Another contribution is hosting interaction through Web board discussions on stories and local topics in general. Depending on the resources put into hosting such discussions, some are quite successful and others have had great difficulty with sustained participation. Since 1996, in places where the Internet is well established, most national elections since have seen major media efforts to make election-oriented news and basic candidate information available. In some sense, the amount of information-especially in more populous nations-is almost too much for the average citizen to wade through.

With each election cycle, we will probably see more localization of content and additional media outlets with more niche content. As they say, all politics is local. Overall, it will be interesting to watch the role very local media outlets take as the sizes of local populations online make it commercially viable to place functions of the neighborhood or rural weekly newspaper online.

Advocacy Online

Many advocacy and political interest groups, including political parties, have an online presence. The early adopters rushed online with Web brochures, yet few are kept up-to-date. Some advocacy groups and political parties maintain extensive amounts of information; others take a minimalist public approach. The use of the Internet in organizing and advocating their positions to government and others is more notable. The use of e-mail and of the Internet's many information resources is changing the way these kinds of groups function. Most advocacy applications usually are tied to an in-house champion or dedicated volunteer, and only a few have moved toward a strategic or coordinated approach by an organization as a whole.

From an advocacy perspective, a good Web hit is when someone finds the cause compelling enough to leave an e-mail address for future updates. Some advocacy examples include the Global Internet Liberty Campaign, which provides e-mail updates on a regular basis. Another is the California Voter Foundation, which provided lobbying advice on whom to contact in support of its successful effort to pass laws that would require electronic campaign finance filing and public access. And the Congressional Accountability Project is building support for legislation that would require online public release of U.S. Congressional Research Service via e-mail updates. Of course all of those efforts use the Web to provide ongoing access to important background information and archives of the information they distribute.

We are now seeing the next generation of advocacy efforts migrate from primarily Internet-related advocacy toward sustained general advocacy. One of the more interesting advocacy efforts supporting use of the Internet was Citizens for Local Democracy in Toronto, Canada. While hundreds met regularly in church basement meetings to organize opposition to the province-directed amalgamation of six cities into a larger Toronto, the online component used e-mail announcements and discussion lists to accelerate information sharing and strategy development.

Tracking those experiences lends support to my feeling that the Internet is an excellent tool for high-energy, short-term opposition efforts. The Internet is more difficult to use over the longer run, when the concerns of a vocal few get amplified to give a sense-perhaps mistaken-of reduced consensus. Overall, I have not experienced an online interactive space that has been successful in generating group consensus on a specific action to be taken. There needs to be a general consensus on positions from the start. I have experienced a number of times when a more detailed understanding of positions and options through online interaction has greatly enhanced and expedited decision making.

The Private Sector and Internet Tools

As I mentioned earlier, the private sector-in particular, the information technology and telecommunications industry and the academic research community-and individuals are developing information and communication tools that provide the infrastructure for democratic

use of the Internet. The amazing pace of and competition in development of Internet-savvy applications are based on the business case that someone will pay for some mix of goods, services, experiences, and content. It may be through advertising that much of the content and online experiences are covered. When it comes to democracy online, a good portion of the activity may be sustained through commercial models. If commercial and government activity covers 85 percent of democracy online activity, the challenge will be to leverage those applications for the remainder by means of nonprofits, voluntary associations, and individual use. Acceleration of efforts that leverage electronic commerce and group communication tool developments for public use is an important priority.

In the area of Internet standards, it also is clear that commercial goals are driving the development process. Accepting that this is the engine for development, how might we integrate the needs of communities and democracies? In short, if we can engineer the best technical methods to facilitate electronic commerce, how can we best engineer the Internet to ensure that important aspects of democracy remains upheld and cherished?

With democracy based on the realism of geography, finding ways to tap more-global economic growth in the commercial areas of the Internet for support of local applications will be important. Whether through grants by corporate and other foundations, gifts from individuals, or commerce mechanisms to create electronic versions of bake sales, the opportunity to resource community interest applications presents itself.

Building Civic Life Online

As the sectors of democracy develop and deepen their content-oriented contributions to democracy online, we need to ask, What is missing?

Have you ever seen an elected official stop by an online newspaper's Web board and say, I'll check back once a week and find out what you, my constituents, want? Have you seen a local citizens organization become established based on discussions that started on a newsgroup? How about competing online media sites that both offer a URL to their related articles on the same e-mail discussion list?

In the last 10 countries I have spoken in, this is where I flip out my circle slides. Imagine, if you will, four slightly overlapping circles representing the positive contribution government, advocacy/political interests, media, and the private sector make to democracy online. Where do those institutions interact with each other online? They don't. Where do citizens publicly interact with them? They don't.

The one-way transfer of content to the Internet has been relatively easy and fairly successful. For the most part, existing democratic institutions use the Internet in their own interest. They must to survive. It is extremely rare for any group to build online efforts-at its own expense-that undermine its influence or to open itself up to greater public scrutiny. This does not mean existing organizations will not interact online-just not if the interactive host is perceived to hold a

position counter to their goals or if an interactive online event's success is placed totally on their shoulders. Attempting to host either organized or open, online interaction can be very resource intensive and risky.

Now overlay a fifth circle: the citizen participation center. The interactive center is a politically neutral forum for citizen-to-citizen interaction on important public issues. Such interactive forums, using multiple technologies, will help democracy online come alive around the world. Embracing geography as a vital component of the Internet, real communities using virtual tools will facilitate public communication on issues-starting in our neighborhoods and local communities and going up to regions and states as well as the national level and among people from many nations. Just as we have used the Internet to escape our geography through global forums based on specialized, narrow interests, we are now discovering we can use the same tools to come home to online forums in the common interest. What we need is a generation of online democracy and community home builders.

I work from broad definitions of politics and democracy. Some use the term community networking when referring to local interaction. As the population in any given jurisdiction shrinks, discussions become less ideological and the forum is of more interest to a broader cross section of the population. Online community conversations are more about having focused discussions-in a public commons, hopefully-not about transferring the often irrelevant and harsh style of global political newsgroups into local communities. In some cases, these conversations will influence government and the media, but more often they will influence the participants as citizens and effect how those citizens interact with the broader world.

A hybrid is emerging between the ideals of the global Internet and the corporate intranet: the application of a mix of e-mail lists, newsgroups, the Web, and chat in very public ways among those who are citizens or interested in the happenings of a specific place. The three democracy online interactive projects I am most familiar with are Minnesota E-Democracy, United Kingdom Citizens Online Democracy, and activities of Malaysia.Net. Active sharing of lessons, experiences, and networking through such projects as Democracies Online (see sidebar) provide a foundation for greater citizen participation in democracy through the Internet.

Minnesota E-Democracy: <http://www.e-democracy.org>

Minnesota E-Democracy was established by a dedicated group of volunteers in 1994 in order to promote participation in democracy through the use of information networks. It has received extensive infrastructure support from the Minnesota Regional Network (MRNet) and the Twin Cities Free-Net. I serve as board chair along with a core of up to 10 active volunteers.

In 1994 the project put most of the candidates for governor and U.S. Senate online via the world's first election-oriented Web site; it held the first online debate via e-mail among candidates at that level; and it launched the MN-POLITICS e-mail discussion forum. Today the MN-POLITICS forum stands out as the public commons or citizen participation center. With a

total of about 400 direct subscribers maintained over three years, the forum is now part of real politics in Minnesota.

For example, in the past six months the media has picked up a number of stories, the state treasurer announced the day before his press conference that he was not running, an official political action committee was conceived and registered by a group of list members who were against public financing of a baseball stadium, the wife of a candidate for governor in 1998 posted messages in support of that campaign, and the St. Paul City Council president used the list to distribute draft legislation and ask for input. Many of the discussions are fairly abstract, but the focus on Minnesota issues and a participant audience that includes citizens and reaches into most of the power circles in the state make the forum an important open public-opinion sphere.

As in 1996 in another U.S. Senate race, a series of e-debates is planned for the 1998 race for governor. These important events, cosponsored by online media sites and other organizations, position Minnesota E-Democracy as a trusted, neutral host that can increase the value of the democracy online contributions of all of the sectors.

United Kingdom Citizen Online Democracy: <http://www.democracy.org.uk>

UKCOD, an independent, nonpartisan effort, began work well before the national election in the spring of 1997. It hosted a number of topical events on such topics as European monetary union efforts and online delivery of government services, and it held an all-party debate during the election. It developed an online interface that uses e-mail lists as the engine behind a clean, Web-conferencing interface.

In December 1997, the UKCOD launched the world's best example of a partnership involving a national government and online consultation right to the Cabinet Office. The Have Your Say site lets the public provide the government with feedback on the proposals within the Freedom of Information White Paper through February 1998. This project will have a profound impact on possibilities in the rest of Europe in general and throughout the Commonwealth countries in particular.

Malaysia.Net: <http://www.malaysia.net>

The SangKancil mailing list is named after a mythical underdog in Malaysia: a deer mouse that scares away a tiger. Hosted by an ISP owned by a Malaysian national in Sydney, Australia, it illustrates the power of an open forum in an environment with a culturally restrained media. A well-respected journalist-in the same generation as the leaders of the country and who is no longer published in print in Malaysia or Singapore-writes news stories for over 800 subscribers. They become talking points on the list. Indicating that the posting circulates widely in the government, Malaysia.Net has received messages containing clarifications from high-level

officials. With an estimated 90 percent of subscribers in Malaysia, the fact that the servers are in Australia points to the complex cross-border impacts of the Internet.

Another nonpartisan project of note is the recently launched Nova Scotia Electronic Democracy Forum, starting with elections in the spring of 1998 in Nova Scotia, Canada. In addition, Project Vote Smart has provided extensive information on U.S. congressional candidates since 1994. And the Democracy Network based in Los Angeles provided extensive Los Angeles election information in the spring of 1997 and partnered with the League of Women Voters in Seattle and others for local elections there last fall. On recent public-speaking trips to Australia and New Zealand, I found considerable interest in creation of both local forums and national forums there. The University of Swinburne in Australia is working on public forums related to constitutional reform that complement the government's official constitutional convention site quite well. And an Australian Electronic Democracy Project has been proposed, as has a project based in Barcelona, Spain.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most democratizing aspect of the Internet is the ability for people to organize and communicate in groups. It is within the context of electronic free assembly and association that citizens will gain new opportunities for participation and a voice in politics, governance, and society.

In the next decade, those active in developing the Internet and those involved with improving democracy have an opportunity to sow the seeds for democracy online in the next century. Like the founding of any modern nation, the choices made today, the ideals upheld, the rules adopted, and the expectations created will determine the opportunities for democratic engagement for generations to come.

Side Bar:

Democracies Online

The Democracy Online Newswire e-mail announcement list covers the topics covered in this article. Send a message to listserv@tc.umn.edu.

In the body of the message, write `subscribe do-wire Your Name (Place)`.

Democracies Online is a new initiative promoting development and sustainability of online civic participation and democracy efforts around the world through experience, outreach, and education. For more information, see <http://www.e-democracy.org/do>.

Michael Eisenriegler, blackbox
Konferenz "Teledemocracy", 29.-30. April 1999
Renner-Institut

Politische Partizipation im Netz

Wir schreiben das Jahr 1992. Der Begriff "Internet" war der breiten Öffentlichkeit noch

völlig unbekannt und "Mailboxen" waren einen Spielwiese von ein paar tausend Computerfreaks. Sie verfügten über ein für Laien völlig unverständliches User-Interface und inhaltlich drehte sich auch alles nur um Computer.

Durch Zufall stießen wir, die nachmaligen Black•Box-Gründer, auf ein Programm, das es auch Laien erlaubte, in der Welt der online-Kommunikation mitzumischen: der FirstClass Client war seiner Zeit weit voraus, besaß ein grafisches Benutzer-Interface und war so intuitiv, daß sich lange Erklärungen und Bedienungsanleitungen erübrigten. Somit war erstmals die Möglichkeit gegeben, daß sich das Netz auch wirklich zu einem Massenmedium entwickeln könnte.

Was jetzt noch fehlte war ein inhaltliches Konzept: wir wollten Jugendlichen die Chance geben, sich mit ihren Gedanken und Meinungen Gehör zu verschaffen und auch dann mitreden zu können, wenn ihnen dies im realen Leben aus irgendwelchen Gründen nicht oder nur schwer möglich ist. Nicht alle haben es leicht im Leben, im Netz aber sieht Dich niemand, und im Schutze des eigenen Wohnzimmers ist es für viele leichter, aus sich herauszugehen und sich Gehör zu verschaffen. Dies war damals unsere These, und sie hat sich teilweise bewahrheitet. Doch dazu später mehr.

Bevor ich nun näher darauf eingehe, warum die Black•Box als Best Practice-Modell für "Teledemocracy" angesehen werden könnte, muß noch der Bezugsrahmen definiert werden, in dem wir uns heute bewegen; denn mit denen, die schon im Netz sind, partizipatorische Übungen abzuhalten ist vergleichsweise einfach. Wo bleiben aber die anderen 90% der Bevölkerung, die das nicht sind?

Am leichtesten überwindbar sind die technischen Barrieren: die Bedienung des Netzes wird immer einfacher und immer weitere Kreise der Bevölkerung haben Zugang zu dem Wissen, das nötig ist, um sich technisch einklinken zu können. Auch das vielbeschworene Generationenproblem ist nicht so groß, wie es auf den ersten Blick scheint; wenn auch viele Pensionisten nicht über die technischen Grundlagen verfügen, so haben sie doch einerseits genug Zeit, um sich damit auseinanderzusetzen und andererseits die Möglichkeit, Hilfe von Nachbarn, Verwandten oder Volkshochschul-Kursen in Anspruch nehmen zu können. Ähnliche Möglichkeiten haben fast alle Bevölkerungsgruppen, die jetzt noch im Netz unterrepräsentiert sind. Das wichtigste ist oft, den Leuten das Modem anzuschließen und ihnen beizubringen, wie sie auf ein Link draufklicken. Der Rest ergibt sich dann meist von selbst.

Die finanziellen Hürden sind oft viel größer: Um regelmäßig von zu Hause aus mitspielen zu können benötigt man einen PC in der Preisklasse ab 15.000,-, einen Anschluß bei einem Provider und eine - trotz Online-Tarif - immer noch sehr geduldige Telefonrechnung. Die finanziellen Voraussetzungen sind zwar schon um einiges leichter herzustellen, als dies noch vor ein paar Jahren der Fall war, trotzdem ist die zusätzliche Belastung, die dadurch einem knappen Haushaltseinkommen aufgebürdet wird, immer noch viel zu hoch. Ich bin mir nicht sicher, ob die weite Verbreitung des

Internets in den USA ausschließlich darauf zurückzuführen ist, daß dort die Ortsgespräche gratis sind. Auf der anderen Seite spielt dieser Faktor aber sicher eine große Rolle. Hier sind die Telefongesellschaften und die Politik samt Regulierungsbehörde gefordert, sich etwas einfallen zu lassen.

Entscheidend ist aber meiner Einschätzung nach der Faktor "Bildung": es entspricht unserer Erfahrung mit der Black•Box, daß zum Beispiel Lehrlinge zwar über genügend Computerwissen verfügen, um sich problemlos Zugang zum Netz beschaffen zu können. Es fehlt ihnen oft aber die nötige Kompetenz, um mit der Schriftlichkeit des Mediums umzugehen. Sie benützen ihre Computer-Skills lieber dazu, sich zu Quake- oder Doom-Sessions zu treffen anstatt komplizierte Informationen zu rezipieren oder sich gar auf irgendeine Form von Diskurs einzulassen. Darin besteht die größte Gefahr für den partizipativen Charakter des Netzes: wenn es nicht gelingt, den Bildungsstand der Bevölkerung entscheidend anzuheben - beispielsweise durch Einführung der Gesamtschule für die 6-18jährigen - ist absehbar, daß Einrichtungen wie die Black•Box nie über den Status einer intellektuellen Spielwiese herauskommen werden und sich der "Mainstream" des Netzes auf dem Niveau von interaktivem Fernsehen abspielen wird. Damit erübrigt sich dann auch jede Diskussion über Teledemocracy zumindest insoweit, als der diskursive Teil des Netzes jenen vorbehalten bleibt, die auch vor Einführung des Internets schon wußten, wie sie sich in demokratische Prozesse einbringen können. Die anderen bleiben wieder draußen.

Nachdem ich nun dargestellt habe, wo meiner Ansicht nach die anderen 90% der Bevölkerung bleiben, möchte ich trotzdem noch kurz darauf eingehen, was es trotz allem für Möglichkeiten gibt, jetzt schon politische Partizipation im Netz zu betreiben.

Für viele Content Provider ist die einzige Form politischer Partizipation, die sie im Netz anbieten, die Veranstaltung von live-Chats mit Politikern und Politikerinnen. Obwohl wir ein bißchen stolz darauf sind, daß wir schon im März 1995 die ersten derartigen Politikerchats mit Hannes Swoboda und Christoph Chorgherr auf der Black•Box veranstaltet haben, ist die Relevanz solcher Veranstaltungen als Partizipationsmechanismus doch etwas dürftig. Politikerchats haben zwar einen gewissen informativen Wert und auch einen nicht zu unterschätzenden Showcharakter, als Medium ernsthafter Auseinandersetzung ist ein Chat aber aufgrund der geforderten Kürze der Statements nicht wirklich brauchbar.

Interessanter sind da schon die klassischen Diskussionsforen, auch Newsgroups oder Konferenzen genannt. Die Black•Box beherbergt davon einige hundert und gibt ihren Usern in der sogenannten "Anarchy" auch die Möglichkeit, selbst Diskussionsforen zu beliebigen Themen anzulegen. Daneben gibt es auch die angemieteten Diskussionsforen unserer Partner, darunter die SPÖ, die Grünen, das Liberale Forum und die ÖVP. Diskussionsforen haben eine starke Identifikationsfunktion für die User. Viele User betrachten "ihre" Konferenzen als ihre eigentliche virtuelle Heimat, die Konflikte, die darin ausgetragen werden, ähneln oft amerikanischen Soap Operas. In den politischen Konferenzen finden oft sehr hochklassige politische Diskussionen statt,

die sich aber leider nach einiger Zeit ergebnislos totlaufen, oder, bei einer gewissen Hartnäckigkeit der Diskutanten, sich erst dann beenden, nachdem sich die verbliebenen Teilnehmer der Diskussion - gewissermaßen rituell - gegenseitig als Faschisten beschimpft haben. Das ist dann der traditionelle Endpunkt jeder Debatte im Netz. Diese Diskussionen mögen zwar für das mitlesende Publikum informativ sein, sie verfehlen jedoch den eigentlich Zweck politischer Partizipation, nämlich die Rückkoppelung zum politischen System. Diese müssen wir jetzt herstellen.

Die Black•Box wird daher in den kommenden Wochen mit den Parlamentsparteien in Kontakt treten und diese ersuchen, jeweils einen Moderator oder eine Moderatorin namhaft zu machen, die mit uns gemeinsam eine politische Diskussion neuen Stils versuchen sollen. Dazu wird ein eigenes Diskussionsforum gegründet, in dem die Moderators jeweils eine aktuelle politische Frage zur Diskussion stellen. Nach einer gewissen Zeit (zum Beispiel vier Wochen) fassen die Moderators die Diskussion gemeinsam zu einer Executive Summary zusammen, die dann wiederum in das Diskussionsforum eingebracht wird. Nun haben alle Teilnehmer an der Diskussion noch einmal die Möglichkeit, diese Summary zu diskutieren und vor allem dahingehend zu überprüfen, ob ihre jeweiligen Standpunkte und Thesen auch entsprechend des Diskussionsverlaufs Beachtung fanden. Die Executive Summary wird dann von den Moderators noch einmal überarbeitet und sowohl im Netz als Standpunkt der Community veröffentlicht, als auch den jeweils zuständigen politischen Entscheidungsträgern zur Kenntnis gebracht.

Entscheidend ist dabei die Rolle der Moderators: diese müssen einerseits darauf achten, daß die Diskussion ergebnisorientiert verläuft und sich nicht in die netzüblichen Kleinkriege aufspaltet.

Andererseits tragen sie auch die Verantwortung gegenüber der Community, daß die Ergebnisse der Diskussion auch wirklich die richtigen Adressaten erreichen; denn sonst läuft die Debatte Gefahr, daß sie zwar nicht das Niveau, aber doch die Relevanz einer Stammtischdiskussion bekommt.

Soweit ein paar unsortierte Gedanken zum Thema "Politische Partizipation im Netz". Aus Zeitmangel war es mir leider nicht möglich, auf alle Aspekte dieses Themas einzugehen, ich ersuche dafür um Verständnis. Ich freue mich aber auf eine spannende Debatte im weiteren Verlauf dieser Veranstaltung und stehe selbstverständlich auch für alle Fragen zur Verfügung.

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Teledemocracy Conference, Vienna, April 29, 1999

THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ELECTRONIC REPUBLIC

by Lawrence K. Grossman

I want to talk to you about three things this evening: First, to describe the shape of what I call, "the electronic republic," the new and unprecedented form of democratic governance that is fast emerging not only in my country but in other nations as well. The rise of the electronic republic has been triggered by the remarkable impact of the new, interactive telecommunications technologies, combined with the century-long trend toward democratization.

Second, I'll briefly describe the advantages and, more important, the potential dangers of this emerging political system. And third, I'll outline the major areas of public policy that need to be addressed to make this new form of democracy, the electronic republic, work effectively and endure in the century ahead.

We have come to this conference in Vienna to discuss "teledemocracy," a label that suggests a system of government driven by the all-powerful medium of television, God forbid. I do not believe that is quite where we're headed. Nor do I believe the new political order will turn into what so many predict and fear, a simpleminded system of "direct democracy," in which major political decisions are made directly by the people themselves through real time electronic plebiscites and instantaneous public opinion polls. You know: "Press 1 if you want to go to war. Press 2 if you think we should stay out. Press 3 if you need more information. Press 4 to recommend which targets to bomb. Press 5 to propose other alternatives."

The evolving electronic republic is a hybrid form of democratic government in which public officials make no major decision without first taking the public's pulse. Public feedback plays a pivotal role in helping to decide every major government action, making the people, in effect, the

new fourth branch of government, sitting alongside the traditional executive, legislative, and judicial branches when key decisions are made.

Like a giant electronic voting machine, daily public opinion polls feed back in real time the views of the electorate, no matter how ill-informed or unformed those views may be. In the words of Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan, "As the speed of information increases, the tendency for politics is to move away from representation and delegation...toward immediate involvement of the entire community in the central acts of decision."

People still want their leaders to lead, rather than merely to pander to the public's whims; but people also now expect their leaders to pay close attention to what they have to say about what government should do or not do on their behalf. And that expectation makes for radical changes in the dynamics of governing. Winston Churchill once remarked disdainfully that the leader who keeps his ear to the ground is hardly in a position to be looked up to by his followers. But in the electronic republic, no leader can afford not to keep his or her ear to the ground at all times.

Elected officials no longer have the luxury to go off to the nation's capital, or to regional or local seats of government, to pass laws and make policy in relative isolation. Until recent times, the classic debate among political theorists over how much elected representatives in a democracy should reflect the opinion of their constituents back home and how much their votes should represent their own best independent judgment, took place in a world in which many groups couldn't vote, news was scarce and hard to come by, and no one really knew how to measure public opinion other than by the results of an election. Today, however, thanks to the new interactive telecommunications technologies, democracy is no longer a leisurely system in which the people simply elect a handful of representatives every few years to make all the important political decisions for them.

No less an authority than venerable banker Walter B. Wriston tells us, "we are now living in the midst of the third great revolution in history." First came the Agricultural Revolution. Then the Industrial Revolution. Now the Information Revolution, spawned by the marriage of computers and telecommunications, a marriage so powerful, Wriston says, it has

"demolished both time and distance." Was that a marriage made in heaven, or, do you think, in hell?

Call it what you will: the Information Revolution, the Telecommunications Age, the Digital Age, the Cyberspace Age, the Internet Age, or the Knowledge Age. It is transforming the workplace, transforming global markets, transforming our economies, transforming our leisure-time, transforming our politics, and will transform the quality of our lives in the twenty-first century.

We are on the verge of the second generation of television, digital TV, which will bring us many hundreds of new program channels and clearer, more vivid pictures and sound on horizontal, movie-like television screens. But most important, digital TV will make TV screens interactive; connecting the television audience to the World Wide Web, making the Internet and e-mail available to everyone with access to a TV set. It will merge the television set with the personal computer. Viewers of digital TV not only will be able to watch an even bigger diet of the usual entertainment and sports programs, they also will receive stock prices, sports statistics, civic information, retail catalogs, and medical data through their TV sets. They'll vote, shop, respond to polls, play games, take courses, talk to each other, communicate with government officials, and ask for and receive information through television. In short, while sitting at home, they'll be able to take part in a great variety of new interactive TV services involving education, information, business, finance, entertainment, sports, and civic and political affairs.

The arrival of the digital age, with its convergence of television, telephone, satellites, radio, computers, and print, is changing our democracies in radical ways, which is what we have come here to Vienna to discuss. The eminent American historian Robert Dahl calls this the third great transformation of democracy. First came direct democracy originating twenty-five hundred years ago in ancient Athens. Then came representative government born in the eighteenth century. Now comes the electronic republic, the new hybrid political order of the twenty-first century that is adding characteristics of direct democracy to the traditional structure of representative government.

The digital age enables the people to participate in the political

process in extraordinary new ways. Gutenberg made everybody a reader. Xerox made everybody a publisher. Interactive telecommunications makes everyone a potential lobbyist, giving the people a seat at the table alongside their political leaders where the major political decisions are being made. The model for the new political order lies in what has already become standard operating procedure in global financial markets. There, traders anywhere in the world, sitting at their computer consoles, make instant judgments about government policies simply by punching in buy and sell orders for currencies, commodities, and stocks and bonds, forcing even the most powerful of governments to react and respond instantly.

Already, throughout the United States, people armed with personal computers, fax machines, and push-button telephones sit in their kitchens, dens, and living rooms and generate small political upheavals. Using the Internet, e-mail, chat groups and web sites, they overcome barriers of time and geography to organize political campaigns with distant fellow citizens who share their passion for abortion rights, prayer in schools, immigration restrictions, environmental issues, welfare reform, home education, or health care reform.

In the state of California, more money is now spent on television and direct mail, lobbying the general public about key political issues than lobbying government officials, which is one reason the cost of politics has soared. In most states in my country, laws are being made by voters in the polling booth through ballot initiatives and referenda as well as by elected officials in the state legislatures. And the volume of referenda and ballot initiatives is rising dramatically.

As one Congressman said a century-and-a-half ago, "Perhaps the severest trial to which the virtue of any people can be subjected is when everyman has a share in the government; for when everyone governs, few indeed are willing to submit to be governed; when everyone commands, nobody likes to obey."

It is striking how fast and how far the changes in the flow of information and public feedback, produced by new, interactive electronic technologies, have altered the dynamics of governing. In the recent White House sex scandal that led to the impeachment of President Bill Clinton but not his removal from office, the special prosecutor's bill of particulars

against the president was released to the world on the Internet at the same time the charges were released to the president himself.

The political elite, the press, the pundits, and even the Congress engaged in a political feeding frenzy, predicting a presidential apocalypse, Clinton's instant resignation, a presidency that was about to self-destruct. But the American people had access to the same information at the same time as the experts, the press, and the Congress. And the people wasted no time letting them know they had come to a very different conclusion from the experts, the press, and the leaders themselves. Public opinion stopped the attempt to oust the president dead in its tracks.

Through incessant polling and the remarkable instant feedback from citizens by e-mail, faxes, and phone calls, the people told the press, the pundits, and the political elite to calm down, back off, chill out, and stop their headlong rush to judgment. In an instance of extraordinary role reversal, the people-at-large became the check-and-balance, the heat shield, protecting the nation against an over-exuberant, out-of-control Washington political and press elite.

We see a more recent example of the public's new role in affairs of state in the world's first Internet Age conflict, the military action against Serbia, whose intensity has been modulated and carefully calibrated daily by NATO's leaders, based in large measure on daily polls of the public's changing attitude.

The rise of the electronic republic was foreshadowed, at least metaphorically, in of all places, the Old Testament's the Book of Daniel. In the parable of the Dream of King Nebachadnezzar, Nebachadnezzar dreamt that his kingdom of gold would be replaced by a kingdom of silver, then by a kingdom of bronze, and finally, by a fourth kingdom, "strong as iron," the Bible says, but mixed with common clay. The fourth kingdom, the Bible predicts, "shall be partly strong and partly brittle." But it "shall not be stable," for iron does not mix well with clay.

We are entering an era in which the "iron" of representative government, where elected and appointed officials make the key decisions, is being mixed with the "common clay" of ordinary people, whose opinion now plays a key role in the decision-making process. Like the fourth

kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the electronic republic is likely to be "partly strong and partly brittle." The "iron" of representative government will have to be mixed carefully with the "common clay" of public opinion, for the electronic republic to be a strong and lasting form of government.

The advantages of the electronic republic are obvious. It offers more democracy, giving people potentially greater influence than ever before over the major laws and policies that directly affect their lives. The electronic republic should make it more difficult for governments to be arrogant, unresponsive, and unaccountable to the people they are supposed to serve.

In author George Orwell's nightmarish novel of the future, "1984," "Big Brother" was the feared, mysterious, distant tyrant who kept every citizen under continuous electronic surveillance. In the real electronic republic of 1999, fifteen years later, "Big Brother" turns out to be the citizens who keep their elected leaders under continuous electronic surveillance, intruding on their private space and poking endlessly into their personal and public lives.

The disadvantages and dangers of the electronic republic are equally obvious and certainly need to be faced squarely. Those who dominate the flow of information have the potential to manipulate public opinion, offering a fertile field for demagogues. In an environment dominated by electronic media, fads and celebrities emerge overnight, seemingly out of nowhere, and disappear just as fast, replaced by the next hot fad or instant celebrity.

Because electronic signals do not respect traditional boundary lines, geography is no longer as central to politics as it once was. Yet the structure of our governments continues to be defined primarily by geography. We vote where we live; government is organized into election districts, precincts, states, and provinces. Such an environment produces the danger of rule by an inflamed, irrational, or impassioned majority that, without a proper system of checks and balances, might well trample on the rights of unpopular minorities. In the pessimistic words of Carnegie Corporation president Vartan Gregorian, "The popular prediction that electronic communication would create a global village is wrong. What is being created," Gregorian said, "is less like a village than an entity that reproduces the worst aspects of urban life: The ability to retreat to small

communities of the like-minded, where we are safe not only from unnecessary interactions with those whose ideas and attitudes are not like our own, but also from having to relate our interests and results to other communities.”

Because the Internet and telecommunications overcome time and distance, the electronic republic could be vulnerable to rash ideas that time and distance might otherwise diffuse. As James Madison, one of America’s founding fathers, said, defending the merging of thirteen states into a single new nation, ”Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens.”

The diminution of time and distance encourages the emergence of single interest politics and the decline of sectional politics. In my country, single issues that provoke strong ideological passions and religious fervor, like abortion, prayer in school, and even the right to carry a gun, have come to dominate, displacing the more traditional political, financial, and sectional issues.

The electronic republic will be vulnerable if its fourth branch of government, the body politic, is indifferent to political issues; if the people continue to be disaffected with, and disengaged from politics. That problem exists now. In the United States, the 1996 presidential election had the lowest voter turnout since 1924. Polls show profound voter alienation, a high degree of public discontent, and an inclination of citizens to drop out of politics as it is now practiced. Membership in civic organizations is shrinking. Going out to vote, once a great event, seems less attractive than going out to shop for election day sales. Many Americans are convinced that whoever wins or loses the election will make little difference to the reality of their lives. An insular preoccupation with self-fulfillment and personal satisfaction has brought with it an apparent decline in concern for the common good and the public interest.

Then there is the growing issue of the distorting influence of money on politics, and its ability to corrupt the development of the electronic republic. It now takes hundreds of millions of dollars to run for national office in the United States. In 1996, 752,000 paid political commercials costing \$400 million ran in the top 75 U.S. markets during the months

before the election. The cost of political campaign advertising on television increased 800 per cent in the U.S. between 1970 and 1996.

As one columnist observed, "We are...awash in political advertising, those floods of insincerity that pass for political discourse in America....Everybody down to the dimmest three-year-old recognizes these commercials as brazen nonsense." The bloated cost of political campaigning imposes a stranglehold on the political agenda, suggesting a takeover by special interests who demand tribute from every candidate for major public office.

Many decry the public's direct involvement and increasing influence in political decision-making. They fear an excess of democracy. How can the public-at-large, which too often seems so uninformed about, and indifferent to major political issues, make sensible choices about complex economic and foreign policy matters? Sound decisions, critics say, require the wisdom and experience of experts. Many also deplore the erosion of serious legislative debate and deliberation, and the difficulty of achieving compromise in the newly prevailing atmosphere of openness and full public disclosure.

The people of the state of Oregon, recently voted to legalize physician-assisted suicide by the razor-thin margin of 51 per cent to 49 per cent. Most legislative bodies, knowing that public opinion in the state was so closely divided about a matter of such deep moral, religious, and ethical impact, undoubtedly would have found a way to defer a decision until a larger public consensus could emerge. The messy and often unsatisfactory behind-the-scenes practical business of political compromise, trade offs, and strategic delay are difficult to achieve when the public is engaged directly in the decision-making process.

Finally, what happens in a media-centered political system when the media fail to give the public the most basic information it needs to make sound, well-informed political choices? On the one hand, people are empowered by having direct access to so much unmediated, original information through the Internet and the new electronic media. On the other hand, the Internet is also a minefield of rumor, mistakes, deceit, confusion, and unreliable sources. Those who rely on it for the bulk of their information run a great risk.

And when it comes to the dominant, all-powerful medium of television, its increasing emphasis on entertainment, sports, and "infotainment" is displacing news and information about serious and significant issues. A century ago, politics and religion served as the main focus of most people's activities and events outside the home. In the U.S., political parties provided jobs and welfare for needy members, and organized picnics, festivals, marching bands, fireworks displays, torch light parades, and rallies in the town square. No longer. Today, television affords everyone endless diversion and occupies most of people's discretionary time. Its comedies, movies, dramas, sports, and gossip, available at all hours of the day and night, have driven politics, political issues, and public affairs off center stage and into the wings.

The new media and the old, propelled by the marketplace's single-minded focus on the bottom line, are extraordinarily good at giving people what they want, like entertainment and diversion that attract big audiences and make money. But they fail badly at giving people what they need, like information about serious issues that don't capture big audiences and tend to cost money. The major media conglomerates we depend upon to report what's happening in the world are now essentially entertainment providers rather than information providers. For companies like ABC/Disney, CBS, NBC, and Fox, serious news is no longer a centerpiece of their work but a sideline, a relatively insignificant blip on their corporate balance sheets. When in 1996, the press asked Disney chairman Michael Eisner why Disney bought ABC Television, Eisner cited the huge profit potential in "the rising global appetite for nonpolitical entertainment and sports."

My point here is that left to the competitive marketplace, despite the enormous promise of the new media – even with the addition of new headline news and talk channels and the capacity to deliver so much more information, perspective, and insight to so many – that potential will not be fulfilled because the marketplace imposes other, more lucrative priorities.

What, then, needs to be done to ensure that the electronic republic, this hybrid new form of democratic governance, will survive and, indeed, thrive in the century ahead? In the brief time I have left, let me outline three areas of public policy that require serious rethinking: the need for structural changes in government to reflect the changes brought about by

the new telecommunications technologies; the need to improve the quality of citizen involvement, given the public's expanding role in government decision-making; and the need for significant media improvement and reform, given the telecommunications media's central influence in determining what the people know and how they spend their time.

Under the U.S. Constitution, the public has no power to make laws and decide policy itself, only to elect the handful of officials who have that responsibility. Now, however, we see a growing dependence on polls by the nation's leaders in exercising their responsibilities. With on-line voting becoming a real prospect, that dependence is bound to deepen and people will want the power to make policy choices themselves. With on-line voting there'll be no need to wait until election day to cast a ballot. The technology makes possible real-time plebiscites in which people can vote from home or work any time a vote is called for, as many now do unofficially when they respond to polls.

In view of the imminence of the technology for electronic voting, we need to examine what limits and reforms to impose on the already rapidly expanding practices of referenda, ballot initiatives, plebiscites, ordinary voting, and even polling. Should super-majorities be required on certain issues before a referendum can become law? Should a cooling off period be imposed before a vote is taken, or should a second, ratifying vote be required so that people can deliberate and consider over time the pros and cons of any issue that confronts them? Should plebiscites be only advisory to legislators, rather than determinative? Should citizens be given veto power over the actions of their legislatures if enough petition for it, as is done even now in Switzerland? Should the courts or the legislatures be given veto power over majority votes? Should the number of times voting is allowed per year be limited? Should there be an official code of standards for political pollsters and polling, or at least a requirement that polling methodology be made public?

In the electronic republic, how do we balance the power of citizens with the responsibilities of their elected representatives? How do we deal with the corrupting influence of money in manipulating public opinion, not only during elections but also between elections, given the rise of expensive media campaigns by special interests to get laws passed or defeated? What limits can be placed on the cost of swaying public opinion

and influencing government, without interfering in free speech? How can we make sure that in the electronic republic, real political power shifts to the people, and not to a small group of individuals skilled in the use of modern techniques of mass communication to twist and shape the public's views?

If the people are to play a more direct day-to-day role in government, they must be well-informed, deeply engaged, and prepared to act responsibly. Achieving a well-informed, deeply engaged, and responsible citizenry will not happen, however, without a determined and continuing major effort.

The ancient Athenians, founders of the world's earliest democracy, recognized that fact perhaps better than any society before or since. The Athenians placed a high premium on informed citizen participation. In the famous words of Pericles, "A man who takes no part in political affairs is called not a quiet citizen but a bad citizen." The Athenians worked continuously to engage and educate the citizens of their tiny city-state. A rotating Council of 500, selected by lot, was responsible for preparing Athenians for the votes they were to take at the next citizen assembly. Certain Council members were even designated to sleep in the marketplace so they would be available to answer citizens' questions about upcoming issues. To the Athenians, the exercise of citizenship and participation in the public sphere were central to the life of their society.

Protagoras described "the education of Greek citizens to political virtue as a broad process that is promoted by parents, fellow citizens, and polis institutions." "Just as all citizens are brought up to speak the language," he said, "so too, from the earliest age, they are educated to political virtue." The electronic republic should take a lesson from that ancient example.

Finally, our media-dominated society now leaves the entire burden of dispensing civic information in the hands of the press, especially television, which is first and foremost a medium of entertainment and diversion. The influence of television on the public's view of politics has largely displaced the role of the political parties, labor unions, the church, and other civic and social institutions that formerly held sway. Yet the irony is that much of the blame for the public's ignorance, for today's impoverished civic life, for the

current crisis of political disaffiliation, for increasing cynicism about government, and for people's growing disinterest in the public sphere can be laid at television's doorstep.

In the digital age, new interactive media bring extraordinary new opportunities not only for entertainment, sports, and commerce but also for major outreach and public service. Public service broadcasting, now in decline just about everywhere in the world due to the dramatic expansion of marketplace-driven commercial telecommunications, must be revived and transformed. The electronic republic needs a well-financed, multi-lane public freeway on the information superhighway to serve all of its citizens. We can no longer afford to rely on the press alone to provide the responsible, fair-minded information a sound democracy requires. Existing highly respected information providers such as our great research universities, public library systems, and non-governmental civic and community organizations should also be mobilized to do the job. Interactive digital telecommunications now make it possible for these institutions to reach beyond their walls and serve ordinary citizens at home with lifelong learning and streams of reliable, well-produced information and analysis about the vital issues of our time. Basic documents and credible data can be made available on the Internet, and in print-outs furnished on demand. Televised political debates, and civic discussions can appear in every home, enhanced by opportunities for audience feedback, questions from viewers, and real-time on-line conversations. Free political time can be made available to candidates and parties to reach every potential voter through cyberspace. The new multimedia digital world must not be left entirely for global commercial conglomerates to exploit. An important section of the information superhighway must be reserved for the free use and benefit of all the citizens of the electronic republic.

Aristotle, no fan of democracy, argued that "democracy... will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost," which he thought would never happen. The astute French observer Alexis de Tocqueville recognized that, "perhaps the only means that we still possess of interesting men in the welfare of their country is to make them partakers in the government."

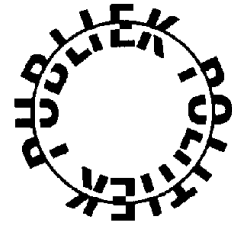
American philosopher John Dewey argued that truth is more likely to

emerge from group deliberation by an "organized, articulate Public," than from a single authority. Public decision-making, he concluded, achieves more than the sum of its parts. Political theorist Hannah Arendt urged that the essence of democratic politics is not merely voting on election day in a booth, which, she pointed out, "has room for only one," but the process of interacting, persuading, and negotiating in a common cause through widespread citizen participation.

As we go about the complicated task of reshaping government and redistributing political power in the century ahead, it is essential that the new telecommunications technologies be harnessed to serve the needs and interests of all citizens. The survival and success of the emerging electronic republic will depend as much on the quality and character of its citizens as on the quality and character of its leaders.

Citizens and New Media

Steven Lenos



*A short presentation of Dutch examples for the conference
'Teledemocracy. Mehr Demokratie durch elektronische Medien?'
Vienna 29 & 30. April 1999*

Steven Lenos is a specialist on New Media, Public and Politics at the Dutch national Institute for Public and Politics.

The Institute for Public and Politics is an independent, non-partisan, not for profit institute for citizenship, democracy and participation.

Steven Lenos organised several digital debates between citizens, politicians and organisations. In march he organised the first Internet based shadow election for school kids (12 - 18 years), two days before their parents voted for the province.

Decision Maker (Besliswijzer)

<http://www.publiek-politiek.nl/bw/>

A model for organised public debate. The quality of the debate was, according to the depute, two grades higher than he found in other forms of participation. These were the succesfactors:

- We didn't start with a government plan (3 steps)
- Independent editorial board
- Pluriform back ground information
- Moderation / hosting (including weekly resume's)
- Registered users (100) with a profile
- Cooperation with a newspaper

Election sites, party comparison and voting advisor

www.provincies.nl and www.publiek-politiek.nl/verkiezingen/

In partnership with the Digital City we make election sites. As an independent and non-partisan institute we're providing information to voters about parties and candidates. Special feature is the **automated personalised comparison of party programs**. The

user chooses the topics and parties he is interested in and by pushing the button he gets the relevant parts of information. The party information isn't the 'raw material' from the election programs but our resume.

The big hit in our election activities is the **Voting Advisor** (Stemwijzer). By answering 15 - 20 questions, which are also asked at the political parties, the program offers a list of parties which are closest to you and which are opposite. The voter can weigh topics he thinks are more important. Also it's possible to see which issue you differ from a specific party or see what a specific party has answered at the different questions.

Internet based shadow elections for school kids

www.publiek-politiek.nl/stemmen/

A shadow election for the European parliament. It's a project for school kids (12 - 18 year old). Schools can decide which pupils (age / classes) can participate. The Institute for the Public and Politics stimulates schools to give special lectures about democracy, elections, democracy, the European parliament and teledemocracy. The schools are provided with information and educational suggestions (organise a debate, have students surf the web and write a paper).

The schools shadow elections attract a lot of attention from the media.

The elections are 'a little bit safe and reasonable secret'. The Digital City provides a pass word system to make sure that people can only vote once. We ask the school to make sure people vote alone and it isn't possible to check what people who voted earlier have voted.

Politeia: network citizenship and democracy in Europe

www.politeia.net/

The network for citizenship and democracy in Europe is a virtual organization of more than 1000 persons and institutions that are active in the field of citizenship and political education and wishing to cooperate at European level.

The goal of the network is to promote the social and political participation of the European citizens. The following activities are available for the network participants: The Newsletter 'Political Education Towards A European Democracy' published four times a year in a printed and on-line version. A directory of institutions in the field of (European) citizenship. Seminars and publications on relevant issues. Click 'Seminars'. The facilitation of co-operation (in various projects and European tenders). A resource guide with hundreds of internetsites with respect to non-governmental organizations all over Europe, European citizenship

It's an initiative from the Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek (Dutch Centre for Civic Education) and the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (German Federal Agency for Civic Education).

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Do internet tools make democratic man?

Developing tools for transparency of information

The Digital City DDS is a freenet in the Netherlands. People can register for free, and obtain a (free) homepage and email address.

From the start in 1994, the Digital City DDS has been promoting the Internet as a medium with a potential for a more democratic relationship between politicians and citizens.

From the beginning DDS has cooperated with the Amsterdam City Council (www.amsterdam.nl) to put information online, and to stimulate local politicians to use the Internet as a communications tool.

Today, I will discuss some of the "best practices". I will show different approaches in the use of the Internet as a medium in which relevant information can be made available. Can the development of better technical tools help to improve the relevance of the available information on the Internet for citizens?

What kind of information is needed, and how should it to be presented to the audience?

Municipal information Amsterdam

From 1994 on The Digital City DDS helped the Amsterdam City Council to open its information databases to the public. The result has been a search engine which enables citizens to find many recent reports from the council and its advisory commissions. It is called BISA (www.amsterdam.nl/bisa)

This is an important service to the public: it makes it easier for citizens to know what the city council is planning, and which decisions are about to be made.

As you can see the presentation is very dull. Still the service is used by a remarkably large number of visitors. A point of criticism: only information of the last 6 months is available. In

order to prepare a critical speech for the council you will probably need more information on the subject, in order to know the history of the Amsterdam policies.

The Amsterdam City Council uses special websites regarding important subjects. These websites are usually good-looking, informative sites, often with newly written texts, and much more like the council's printed information folders. These websites fulfil a need as well. The approach can be like that of the Amsterdam City Council's Ecology Department. Behind a thin layer of design you can find all the official reports, lots of texts, and an attempt to stimulate a debate on future ecological politics among citizens. (www.milieubeleidsplan.amsterdam.nl). But there are also other approaches, such as the special web site on IJburg, a new part of the city to be built in a lake (www.ijburg.amsterdam.nl). Here the information on the plans is concise but news and the agenda are more prominent, These special websites are usually good-looking, suitable for a large audience, and they often contain much information. It is a pity that there are almost no links between these websites and the information system BISA. It is as if the political discussion around a topic happens on another planet compared to the one where entertaining and educating of the audience takes place. It seems that an opportunity for citizens to get involved in the politics around the themes they are interested in has been lost.

Transparant Amsterdam

Making information attractive and finding ways to order information in a useful way have been the goals of the Transparant Amsterdam project. It is an attempt to picture all building plans in Amsterdam and the region. The project is developed by the ARCAM architecture institute, together with the Digital City DDS, the Society for Old and New Media and the Amsterdam City Council. It is a website where visitors can navigate through a map of the region, and get information on all the building plans available: www.transparant.net The application uses many advanced tools. You can activate different layers on the map, in order to see only the plans for new industrial areas, or all the plans for housing areas. By clicking on the highlighted spots on the map you get the available information on the building plans. All information is stored in a database to allow easy updating of the website. For visitors it is an elegant starting-point for collecting information and it has a fast navigation tool.

The website contains links to the BISA system and other websites of the city council, whenever relevant. That is a good start. However, more could be done. Both the transparency and the openness would be enhanced if online information of other parties concerning a building project were available as well. Then citizens could get a well-balanced picture of all views on the pro's and cons of the building projects.

Working together in one website

A way to organise this is by opening part of your database to a larger audience. The DDS project for the municipal elections in Holland presents a model for working out tools to enable information from different parties to be collected in one website, while each party is responsible for its own information. (<http://www.dds.nl/raadsverkiezingen/>)

For the municipal elections DDS made a database to which each political party in every municipality could submit its own election programme. (This was password protected). To do so, not knowledge of internet languages was required. There were forms to fill out, which were then automatically translated into web pages for the Internet.

Political parties were only responsible for the contents of their information.

On the website citizens could compare the ideas of the different parties on specific themes, by selecting and comparing parts of the election programmes. They could also enter debates with the local parties in the discussion page.

Although in a different form, such an approach could be used to increase the openness of a project like Transparent Amsterdam to contain more than just the information of the project developers.

Easier publishing tools will open up the Internet to more people and enable working together.

Working with databases and forms on the Internet offers many new possibilities.

The strong concepts in this approach are

- Political parties were responsible for their own information and non-information. In some cases local parties omitted their views on sensitive issues. In the discussion pages, the audience demanded clarity, and were only satisfied when the parties revealed their views on the more difficult local issues. The parties were held accountable for their presentation.
- A relative open structure, with self-service: all parties could submit their own relevant information relatively easy, through the use of forms, without having to use html. The standardisation offers the opportunity to compare information from different parties that contribute to the website.
- It is a good way to stimulate people who would normally not be working together to do so , on one website all the same.

It has become technically easy to allow information from other parties to be placed right next to your own information, while each party is still responsible for its own information. Municipalities and governments may not feel the need to facilitate this, preferring to present their own views only.

However, future internet users will probably consult only those websites that offer the service of presenting all information to the audience in a well-balanced way. This was clearly shown in the case of the municipal elections. The comparison of programmes was consulted by a very large number of people, especially in the days just before the election.

Digital Cities, independent from governments, could be a good neutral party to offer these services. It might be the role of the governments to fund these virtual city information brokers. This, I think, will be the best future use of the Internet for making information transparent, and offering citizens a well-balanced view of the issues at hand.

While internet technology makes information management and publications easier and more efficient, optimal use of the Internet to make government more transparent and supply

information relevant to citizens and politicians is not dependent on technology. In the end, the mindset of people will determine how efficient the Internet will be used as a tool.

Nina Meilof
The Digital City DDS

**Teledemocracy:
Transforming Representative Democracy through
Televote, Electronic Town Meetings, and Deliberative Polling**

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**Teledemocracy
Renner Institut
Vienna, Austria
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The Televote experiments are teledemocratic projects designed to test the capacity and willingness of citizens to participate in establishing priorities, creating public agendas, developing public policies, and re-structuring political institutions. The experiments were originally designed to test the prevailing hypotheses and analyses in the political science literature that citizens are neither interested nor capable of participating in politics beyond voting for political leaders. Whereas some analyses saw citizens too apathetic to be actively involved in politics, a more common analysis concluded citizens were content with the political system and trusted political leaders to study the facts and to deliberate in developing public policies. After all, citizens are busy with their families and jobs and they need to turn the complicated process of governing over to those who are skilled and knowledgeable.

The problem with this analysis, however, is that it overlooked data revealing that citizen confidence and trust in government in the United States had fallen steadily since the mid 1960s. The Televote experimenters hypothesized that citizens desired a voice in government and they wanted to be heard. With widespread education, instant communication, and modern technologies, citizens had greater capacity than ever to participate in democratic governance. Were they ready for teledemocracy?

DEFINING TELEDEMOCRACY

In 1981, Ted Becker wrote an article in *The Futurist* entitled "Teledemocracy: Bringing Power Back to People." He defined teledemocracy as "electronically aided, rapid, two-way political communication...[that] could offer the means to help educate

voters on issues, to facilitate discussion of important decisions, to register instantaneous polls, and even to allow people to vote directly on public policy.” (Becker 1981, 6) At the time that Becker was writing about how advances in communications technologies could lead to a purer form of democracy, the Internet had not been invented, the world was not linked to live news coverage broadcast twenty-four hours a day, and voting electronically from the home for political leaders or policy preferences had only been tested in a few isolated experiments. Becker was very much a visionary, but even he did not foresee the imminent explosion in technology nor could he imagine how the esoteric ARPA-net would metamorph into the public-friendly Internet. Thus, as Becker has come to realize, teledemocracy is not just **rapid, two-way communication system**, it is **instantaneous, multi-way communication** that links persons across continents and oceans. And also importantly, it is relatively **cheap, decentralized, user-friendly communication**.

Six years after Becker’s article celebrating the inevitability and potential of teledemocracy, F. Christopher Arterton’s book on teledemocracy posed the question: “Can technology protect democracy?” (Arterton 1987) In answering his own question, Arterton sought to change the original definition of teledemocracy. First, he mistakenly argued many futurists conceived of teledemocracy as “the establishment of direct democracy through the use of communication media.” (Arterton 1987, 14)

Actually, all of those of which I am aware, including Becker, also see teledemocracy as improving and being compatible with representative democracy. Arterton, however, defined teledemocracy as the “use of technology to facilitate the

transmission of political information and opinion between citizens and their political leaders.” (Arterton 1987, 14) In no way, did Arterton approve of the use of information and communication technologies to “undercut our established representative machinery.” (Arterton 1987, 14) He stated that he “emphatically reject[s] the notion that the only acceptable vision of democracy involves direct participation by citizens.” (Arterton 1987, 204) With his bias opposing a telecommunications-enhanced, direct citizen participation explicitly stated, Arterton concludes his study of thirteen teledemocracy experiments with the answer to his original question: Technology can ease some of the major problems in democracy, but teledemocracy does not lead to a “major transformation” nor a “final fulfillment.” (Arterton 1987, 204)

Many of the Televote experiments I conducted with Becker were included in the Arterton study of teledemocratic projects, as well as in a 1988 analysis conducted by Arterton, Jeffery B. Abramson, and Gary R. Orren in *The Electronic Commonwealth: The Impact of New Media Technologies on Democratic Politics*. At the outset, the goals of the experiments fit within Arterton’s definition of teledemocracy--“use of technology to facilitate the transmission of political information and opinion between citizens and their political leaders.” After completing and/or assisting in a dozen Televote experiments in the United States and New Zealand, however, we have come to understand that **teledemocracy is and should be more much than the transmission of political information and opinion between citizens and their political leaders.**

Through these experiments, we have accumulated a great deal of data about the dysfunctions of representative democracy and how an informed and activated citizenry

can vastly improve its performance. This can be accomplished by using Televote and other scientific deliberative polls in collaboration with other new participatory technologies and techniques that have been developed through research and experimentation. At the very least, teledemocracy has the power to transform representative democracies into **shared power between citizens and political leaders**, a situation that will greatly reduce the vast divide between them that characterizes Western democracy today.

TELEVOTE: OBTAINING INFORMED AND DELIBERATED PUBLIC OPINION

In the mid 1970s Vincent Campbell began to experiment with public opinion polling in San Jose, California. He wanted to find a means to bring more parents as well as students into the educational policy-making process. He believed that a means to achieve this was through the following process. First, information was gathered for citizens on a variety of policy alternatives. Second, there were presented to them with pro and con arguments for various alternatives. Third, the citizens were given time to think about the options before casting their votes by telephone, which were machine tabulated automatically. He called his vote-by-phone system, which relied on a **self-selected sample**, *Televote*. Campbell was able to dramatically increase the number of knowledgeable citizens participating in education policy discussions. However, his self-selected group was highly unrepresentative of the public at large, despite efforts to produce information packets in Spanish, as well as English.

In 1978 Becker and I brought Campbell to Hawaii as a consultant to help us develop materials and procedures to conduct *Televote* polls in Hawaii during a state constitutional convention. We knew citizens were only dimly aware of the different types of issues addressed at constitutional conventions (restructuring political institutions) as compared to legislative sessions (passing laws). Campbell's process had proved itself as an innovative method to educate citizens, introduce them to a wide range of alternatives, and to encourage discussion with their family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers before casting their votes by phone.

Features of the Hawaii Televote Method

Randomly-selected Participants. We altered Campbell's model by selecting approximately 400 Televoters through a random digit dialing method. During an eight-year period, the random Televote model, which produced highly representative samples of 400-1,000 citizens, was tested twelve times in Hawaii, New Zealand, and Los Angeles, California. Topics ranged from those of a small, poor ethnic neighborhood's concerns over their health clinic services to nationwide futures planning in New Zealand. Each time the process was used, it was refined and new hypotheses about citizen participation were tested. This method of polling has also been at the core of much larger and lengthier teledemocratic projects known as Electronic Town Meetings.

Different Base of Operation. An important feature of the Televotes projects in Hawaii and New Zealand is that they were conducted by university researchers and students within a university research setting and as a part of the university curriculum.

Professors with expertise in survey research taught a course in research methods that experimented with and refined the Televote methodology. Not only were we, as researchers, designing a method of public opinion polling to measure informed and deliberated public opinion, but we were also testing the degree to which citizens could understand complex issues, were willing to read information to become more informed, discussed the issues with others, and were satisfied with the Televote process.

On the other hand, several government agencies also hosted and ran Televote polls using their own staffs. In addition, the Los Angeles Televote was designed and operated by a professional, commercial public opinion polling company. Thus, Televote can be run from academic, governmental or business bases of operation.

Information Presented in Visually Attractive Brochures. We believed that citizens were more likely to read material on complex issues if it were presented in a visually attractive format. All Televote brochures made extensive use of graphics and color. We adopted Campbell's Televote logo and enhanced it with themes appropriate to the location of the experiment (palm trees in Hawaii and kiwi birds in New Zealand). We stamped the envelope containing the Televote brochure that we mailed to participants with the Televote logo and the message: "Televote- Your Hotline to Government."

Undisputed Facts and Balanced Pro and Con Arguments. One of the most complex and painstaking parts of the Televote process is preparing the factual information, articulating a number of alternatives, and presenting balanced pro and con arguments. We are particularly concerned with broadening the debate beyond a choice between only two options and beyond the scope usually presented through the popular media. For instance, the subject of our first Televote was initiative and referendum--the

mechanisms by which citizens directly make laws or approve laws proposed by legislators. In providing factual information, we provided definitions, identified states that gave citizens the power of initiative and referendum, explained different versions used in the states, and described the mechanisms for getting initiatives on the ballot. In providing options for Televoters, we asked those who supported initiative to indicate which version they preferred and to answer a series of questions about how complex the process should be for citizens exercising the power. (It is interesting to note that although 86% of the Televoters wanted citizens to have the power of initiative, a majority of them preferred the indirect form that required participation of the legislative body and nearly 75% preferred a the forms that made in more difficult for citizens to utilize.)

Developing pro and con arguments requires the sponsors and/or researchers to go directly to the advocates of many positions. Organized interests and/or citizen activists are generally eager to assist in developing the pro and con arguments for Televote. As researchers, we first consult with them to draft the pro and con arguments for the Televote brochure. Working with individuals or groups with very diverse views, we develop this section with careful attention to balance.

Interaction with the Televoters. We learned from Campbell's experiments that although Televoters could call and cast their "votes" into a telephone-computer system, only 15% of those registered to vote actually did so. This percentage is consistent with the expected return rate of questionnaires that are sent through the mail instead of conducted by telephone interviewers. Therefore, we decided to institute a "call-back" feature to our Televote. Since we obtained the addresses and telephone numbers of

our participants when we recruited them through random digit dialing, we planned to call them back at a specified time convenient to them unless they had already called in their responses earlier. We found precisely what Campbell had discovered, only about 15% of the respondents call back on their own. So, it is a very important feature of the process that, in order to obtain samples that are highly representative of the population at large, we needed to have our staff interact with the Televoters and assure them of the value of their participation.

Some may conclude that if Televoters do not call back on their own initiative, it is an indication they are really disinterested and do not want to participate. The way we see it, there are many pressing demands on people's lives these days and that the most committed citizen or government official is often responding to the demands where the pressure is greatest. When citizens cannot be assured that their opinions will be considered in the development of public policies, it is not surprising that they do not take much initiative to offer their opinions. We reassure them that their opinions are important to us and that we will definitely carry the results of the Televote to the mass media and relevant government officials.

Encouraging Discussion with Others and Taking Time to Deliberate. Most telephone pollsters want instantaneous response to questions posed to the respondent over the telephone. Sometimes they will screen respondents before asking questions in order to determine if the person has sufficient knowledge to answer the survey. Nevertheless, once the respondent agrees to answer the questionnaire, the process usually takes less than thirty minutes. The respondent has no time to mull over the answers or to ask others their views or to change his or her mind upon reflection. These

superficial, hurried, often uncertain replies are what pollsters and politicians call "public opinion" and then they disparage it. The problem is not with the public. It is with the instrument.

Our method wants citizens to respond only after discussion with others and reflection. We believe this feature is an important component of obtaining informed and **deliberated** opinion from a scientific sample. In our brochure, we encourage the respondents to take the time to think about the issue and to discuss it with their family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Whenever we have conducted Televotes in combination with Electronic Town Meetings, we also provide our Televoters with a complete list of the other outlets for information--radio talk and call-in shows; television features, documentaries, and call-in shows; computer discussion groups; newspaper articles and features; face-to-face meetings, and so forth. The newest of **this** kind of process is a new dimension of public opinion: in-depth and thoughtful public opinion.

Versions of Televotes

The Televote method has been successfully employed at many different levels of government and pertaining to a wide array of issues. Each of the experiments yielded impressive evidence of the eagerness of citizens to participate on discussing and resolving complex issues.

State Constitutional Issues. The first two Televotes were conducted prior to and during a state constitutional convention in Hawaii. The two major institutional re-

structuring issues being debated at the convention were: (1) initiative and referendum, which would give law-making powers to citizens and (2) best method of selecting state judges, including alternatives ranging from the existing system of gubernatorial appointment to election by citizens. (Televoters chose merit selection with retention election by citizens.)

State Legislative Agenda Setting. Following the Televotes on state constitutional issues, we gave Televoters the chance to select their priorities for the state legislative session that was about to commence. We called this Televote the "Public Agenda." They identified the issues they wanted addressed during the legislative session and also prioritized by selecting the top five issues. There was an impressive consensus revealed in this Televote. The most important finding was that the public's top concern-- education--was not nearly the top concern of either the legislators or the media, who focused their attention much more extensively on crime.

City, County and State Policy Preferences. The mayor of Honolulu and the governor of Hawaii were at odds for years over plans to alleviate the increasing traffic congestion in Hawaii. The governor preferred building more highways and the mayor advocated developing a light rail system. Because both plans were costly and needed federal funds to assist in financing the projects, it was imperative that the two elected officials work together to present a joint-proposal to the federal government. Neither was willing to give in to the other and the federal government refused to commit funds as long as the two levels of government were feuding. The Televote presented both plans and discussed other options. The ideas offered by the governor and mayor both failed to receive majority support from Televoters, indicating the Televoters were as

polarized as the elected officials. A sizable percentage of Televoters voted for "none of the above." We recommended to the policymakers that they reevaluate their plans and work to create a compromise plan that addressed citizen concerns. Both sides adamantly refused to compromise and fought over the issue for years while the costs for constructing the highway that ultimately was built skyrocketed and a system to alleviate the traffic congestion in the heart of the urban core have never materialized.

National Futures Planning. In New Zealand the Director of the Commission for the Future sponsored a nationwide Televote to involve the citizens in futures planning. In a highly sophisticated process that asked 1,000 New Zealand Televoters to choose the political, economic and environmental components of their preferred future, the vast majority of New Zealanders selected futures that were strongly at odds with the policy direction of the ruling party. A year after the Televote was conducted in New Zealand, the Commission for the Future was abolished. The ruling National Party continued on its path of extensive growth and exploitation of natural resources, greater involvement in international affairs, and support of big business. Three years later, however, the Labor Party wrested control of the government and pursued policies more in the direction chosen by a majority of the New Zealand Televoters. Brian Murphy, the Dean of the School of Business at Auckland University and one of the New Zealand Televote researchers believes that closer attention to the Televote results by the National Party could have helped them foresee that they were losing touch with the future desired by most New Zealanders. (Slaton 1992, 155)

Budget Issues. Following the national New Zealand Televote, we decided to involve the citizens in creating a "Public Budget." This was during the heyday of the

Ronald Reagan downsizing of government. "Trickle down" economics-based on the belief that cutting taxes for the rich and reducing government costs and services would spur the economy--was the order of the day. State governments were dramatically affected by this policy, which resulted in fewer federal dollars to support state programs and services. States were scrambling to resolve their own budget crises and trying to determine if they should raise taxes and/or cut programs.

The Televote process on this complicated issue was supplemented by a month-long series of informational and interactive programs as a part of the Honolulu Electronic Town Meeting process designed by the Televote team. The media (newspapers, radio, and television) cooperated in this endeavor to expand the coverage of the issue and to incorporate interactive components--call-in shows, polls, electronic voting, and discussion. The expanded participation of citizens beyond the Televote voting greatly exceeded all our expectations.

Regional Issues and State Initiative Ballot Issues. In 1982 a regional group of urban and suburban governments from Los Angeles to San Diego, California adopted the Televote method to present information to citizens on issues of regional concern, some of which were also to be voted on by citizens on initiative ballots. The officials saw Televote as a means of educating citizens and encouraging debate and deliberation, but most of all they needed to know what ideas the public would support in order to plan for an orderly Olympics in 1984. The Televote process was included as the central part of a much larger Electronic Town Meeting process that included all the components mentioned above plus a computer-based discussion group. The results proved extremely useful to the Southern California Association of Governments

(SCAG)—and they used the information to hold what was considered to be a very well-planned Olympics.

Health Policy Planning at Neighborhood and State Levels. Public administrators working for the State of Hawaii Department of Health sought our assistance in developing priorities for the state health department. They were faced with a series of issues: (1) how to address reduced funding for a health clinic in an impoverished Native Hawaiian community; (2) what policies to adopt to protect the health of children when parents could not afford health care or opposed treatment on religious grounds; and (3) how to address the problem of teenage pregnancy. They believed the Televote method could help them educate the citizens about health issues and could be a means to guide them in establishing policies that were intimately connected to value preferences. Through these experiments, public officials learned that: (1) citizens will pay for services if they are allowed to participate in prioritizing which services will be provided by government at no cost; (2) poor, uneducated citizens will eagerly participate in processes to better inform them and to promote deliberation if they are involved in developing policies that directly affect their lives (neighborhood health clinic); and (3) federally mandated or funded programs may be inconsistent with the greatest needs and concerns of communities that are far removed from centralized decision makers.

Important Findings of the Televote Experiments

After conducting twelve experiments and refining the Televote tool each time we used it, we have drawn the several conclusions from our research:

(1) A representative sample of citizens (equivalent to that of conventional surveys) will participate in projects that involve reading material, discussing it, and deliberating about it before responding. Even in cases where the questionnaire is complex and requires attention to detail, such as the futures planning Televote conducted in New Zealand, the demographics of the randomly selected Televoters closely resembled the population at large.

(2) The more complex the information and the greater the number of options provided the citizens, the more sophisticated and refined the responses. From the first Televotes we did during the Hawaii state constitutional convention on initiative and referendum and the method of selection of state judges, we consistently found Televoters selecting options that had rarely been presented or revealed in earlier more traditional polls. Our results led us to conclude that the lack of information and the restricted (and often simplistic) alternatives conventional polling rarely allows pollsters to tap into the potential ability of citizens to make refined choices that reveal an understanding of the complexities of the issue.

(3) Given a wide range of alternatives, citizens tend to reject unlimited power to the people in favor of more accountability of representatives. As an example, citizens in Hawaii favored initiative at the state level, but preferred indirect over direct initiative and wanted the petition process to get initiatives on the ballot to be fairly difficult. As indicated earlier, rather than electing judges directly, most Televoters wanted judges to be chosen by a merit selection committee with retention elections to follow after a lengthy term on the bench.

(4) The public agenda was frequently found to be significantly different from the agenda of the media and elected officials. As previously noted, when government officials in Hawaii were emphasizing crime control in their campaign speeches and pushing transportation issues in their policy agendas, the Televoters selected education issues as being at the top of their list of concerns.

(5) Administrators concerned about policy implementation often embraced Televote whereas policy makers often ignored it. When our Televotes were sponsored by the Hawaii Health Department of Health, which was administering state and federal grants of programs, the official who commissioned the Televote was very interested in using Televote to guide him in making tough decisions to implement the policy. The same was the case with SCAG. Yet when the mayor of Honolulu received Televote results, showing respondents rejected his transportation plan that had been his pet project, he ignored the results. Some state legislators and convention delegates, as well as the Prime Minister of New Zealand, were openly hostile to those who shared the Televote results with them.

(6) A significant number of citizens usually discussed the issues with others before voting in Televote. We specifically questioned our Televoters in one of our later Televotes about whether they had discussed the issue with others and if so, with whom. A majority of them said they had talked about the issue with one or more persons.

(7) Level of citizen awareness increases with Televote. This can be explained in a few different ways. First, we compared our Televote results with other polls that were conducted a few months or weeks before Televote. In some cases, we saw sizable decreases in "do not know" categories after Televote information was given. Second,

our results indicate that the Televote format of broadening the options, led to respondents selecting choices that the public seemed relatively unaware of prior to reading the Televote material. Finally, after Televotes received extensive media coverage or were utilized by individuals or groups in public testimony before policy-makers, we found the issue gaining greater attention from policy-makers, political activists, concerned citizens, and researchers. This in turn encouraged even more media attention.

(8) Randomly selected Televote results are significantly different from responses to self-selected polls, such as votes placed to 800 and 900 numbers both in terms of demographics (self-selected samples are usually heavily skewed to be male, Caucasian, conservative) and opinions. We examined comparative data on this issue in Hawaii, New Zealand, and Los Angeles. In each of those locations, Televotes were conducted under a larger Electronic Town Meeting umbrella. While the Televote group served as the only scientifically-selected random group, other outlets were open for citizens to participate by mailing in ballots or calling in their responses. Demographic data was collected on all groups and consistently the demographics of the self-selected groups were vastly different from the population at large and the highly representative Televoters. Another important note is that the Los Angeles Televote project focused on four initiatives that citizens later voted on. Not only were Televoters a reflection of the public at large, but the Televote results were within 4 percentage points (within the margin of sampling error) of the actual vote and predicted the actual vote of the citizens voted. By contrast, vote of the self-selected group was 6 - 15 percentage points off from the actual vote and only predicted two of the outcomes.

(9) Response rate was not affected to any significant degree by sponsorship of government. Seven Televotes were sponsored by government and five were not. Response rates were consistent throughout the Televotes.

(10) Televotes can increase participation of lower educated groups particularly if the issue is one in which they have a keen interest, like responding to questions about the future of the community health center..

(11) When Televotes were heavily concentrated in a small area, such as a neighborhood compared to a city or state, the level of interpersonal citizen interaction on the issue increased. In the same low-income community discussed above, we found that Televoters were talking with others even before we finished our recruitment phase of the project. It was not unusual to call a house to solicit participation in the project and to have the person we called already familiar with the Televote through a neighbor or relative. The Televoters themselves were encouraging others to participate. Thus, a saturation of Televotes stimulated widespread face-to-face discussion and thought in the community—but only the random sample voted.

OTHER MODELS OF CITIZEN DELIBERATION

For nearly three decades researchers exploring and refining ways to increase citizen participation have created new processes and political institutional change to better inform citizens, encourage interaction among them, and stimulate deliberation. The concerns were not merely to increase the degree of participation but to also improve its quality by providing citizens, policymakers, and public administrators with tools to assist them in making informed, thoughtful choices about public policies.

A feature that is common to these experiments is that each uses **representative samples of citizens**. Some of these experiments in citizen deliberation utilize stratified sampling, and some employ random sampling. All project designers are concerned with hearing a wide assortment of diverse voices, bringing the disengaged into the political arena, and creating environments in which citizens interact with each other respectfully and empathetically.

Old models of citizen meetings usually are based on the open public hearing or the "Blue Ribbon Commission" to guide policy makers and implementors. Both models rarely produce representative samples of citizens and both are subject to the self-interested motives and manipulations of organized interests that often represent the interests of wealthy or vocal minorities, not the common interests. There are numerous other problems that these types of models cannot adequately address, however, there are several alternatives that are emerging out of extensive research in several countries.

The first major experiments along these lines were conducted in Germany in 1972 by Peter Dienel. He designed a system called Pflannungszelle or *Planning Cells*

in which a total of 25 randomly selected citizens come together over a 4-day period to serve as an advisory body to an official arm of government. During the four days citizens move back and forth between small planning cells composed of 5 persons each to plenary sessions facilitated by two moderators. Citizens rotate in and out of planning cells during the time frame so that no hierarchy emerges within the small groups and so that intense personal interaction with larger numbers is enhanced. Each participant is provided information packets provided by experts with wide-ranging points of view. They also have experts on hand to gather more information, seek clarification, question, and even challenge. Thousands of Germans have participated in these government-sponsored activities which had been utilized 155 times in 39 locations up to 1997.

Only a short time after experimentation began on Planning Cells in Germany, Ned Crosby founded the Jefferson Center in the United States which developed a citizen deliberation process for public policy modeled after the American jury system utilized in the legal system. Certainly if average citizens have the capacity to "determine facts" and apply them to the law in criminal and civil trials, it follows that they may also have the ability to make judgments on policy choices after listening to experts, weighing the facts, and ponder together. Crosby's *Citizens Juries* and *Policy Juries* are composed of 24 citizens selected through a process of random sampling combined with a thorough review of demographic variables to ensure juries represent a diverse cross-section of the population at large. More than 20 projects have been conducted since 1973 that have demonstrated the capacity of citizens to develop complex policies on issues such as national health care, peacemaking in Central America, and low

income housing. Unlike the Planning Cells, most of these projects are performed completely independent of government.

Several other hybrid models have developed in other countries after findings of the Dienel and Crosby projects began to be disseminated and the two inventors began to consult on other citizen participation projects. Lyn Carson has conducted *Australian Policy Juries* since 1992 that are patterned after the Crosby model. Anna Coote and Jo Lenaghan of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in the United Kingdom acknowledge that design of *IPPR Citizens' Juries* is based on knowledge gained through research conducted in the German and American experiments. They began a series of pilot projects in 1996 that addressed several health policy issues, such as rationing health care, mental health services, and services for the dying.

More than a decade later, James Fishkin developed the *Deliberative Poll*, a much more costly and complex process that brings together 200-400 randomly-selected citizens for a process very similar to that developed in the Planning Cells—on a much grander scale, however. His first experiment was a highly successful, televised exercise in Great Britain dealing with crime issues. He later demonstrated the model as a better alternative to selecting American presidential candidates than the primary process. More recently he has worked with several Texas utility companies that are facing increased competition as a result of government deregulation. They have become convinced that the best way to attract customers is to give them what they want. Rather than attempting to create artificial demands through extensive advertising, these companies have concluded they will get the competitive edge if they work with environmentalists, regulators, and other experts to present alternatives to citizens and

to have citizens sort through the various options in face-to-face large group and small group meetings over a 2_-day period. Fishkin polls his participants prior to their participation in the process and at the conclusion. Unlike the citizen jury and planning cell model, he does not seek to build consensus. He fears the coercive tendencies in consensus-building and wants to create an environment in which minority viewpoints are not blended into a single solution. What he has proved conclusively, however, is that scientific deliberative polling produces substantive and significant **qualitative** differences in public opinion.

COMMON FINDINGS OF THE NEW MODELS OF CITIZEN DELIBERATION

All these experiments in deliberative polling have similar findings--in other words, that citizens in modern representative democracies have the capacity to understand complex issues; strive for the common good; and consider minority interests. Most projects detected a distrust of elected officials and a skepticism that government leaders really cared about what they thought. All experiments asked participants to evaluate their degree of satisfaction with the process and/or their willingness to participate again. The overwhelming majority of participants were very favorable. All project designers conclude that if these new models of citizen deliberation do not lead to an increased voice for citizens and begin to affect policy decisions, then citizens, no matter how enjoyable or satisfied with the process, will conclude that the process is just another attempt at political manipulation by elites and citizens will lose interest in them. And most project designers have found what Peter Dienel refers to as the "ripple effect." After they

have participated in these exercises, citizens are motivated to become more informed and to encourage others to participate. Follow-up questionnaires have confirmed this in a number of projects.

CONCLUSION

We return to our earlier discussion of the definition of teledemocracy and place Televote and other examples of deliberative polling under the teledemocracy umbrella. Arterton attempted to create a false dichotomy in defining teledemocracy. It was either a form of direct democracy that utilized modern technologies to replace representative democracy (supposedly preferred by futurists) or a system of employing technology to improve communication between citizens and representatives that would strengthen representative democracy (preferred by Arterton). Actually, there is a vast middle ground in between the two extremes. It is difficult, if not impossible, to find researchers in our democratic systems who propose to replace representative democracy with pure democracy. Yet, it is also abundantly clear from the research of scholars who are developing methods to better inform citizens, encourage dialogue, and foster deliberation, that representative democracy must undergo a transformation if it is to survive the challenges of the Information Age and its agents—information and communication technologies.

Representative systems are founded upon the faulty assumptions that citizens are motivated by their passions and selfish interests and lack the education and wisdom to govern, whereas political leaders "refine and enlarge" the public views and reach decisions through a process of fact finding and deliberation that seeks the common good. More than two hundred years ago, Declaration of Independence author Thomas Jefferson warned that the greatest threat to democracy was not majority tyranny or the ignorance of the people. Instead he worried about the egoism of the political leaders and an unchecked elite that would try to dupe the people for their own personal gain. Teledemocratic theorists and researchers are attentive to the advice given by Jefferson to guard against abuse of government power and to preserve democratic principles: "Cherish therefore the spirit of our people, and keep alive their attention. Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them. If once they become inattentive to public affairs, you and I, and Congress and Assemblies, judges and governors shall all become wolves." (Jefferson 1984, 881)

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Referat für die Konferenz "Teledemocracy – Mehr Demokratie durch elektronische

Medien?" am 30. April 1999 - Renner Institut, Wien

Jörg Tauss, MdB⁶

e-Vote: Die "elektronische Wahl" als ein Beitrag zur Verbesserung der Partizipationsmöglichkeiten ?

1 Demokratie und Legitimationskrise - ein Plädoyer für die Nutzung neuer Optionen

Digitale Agora oder Telekratie, lebhaft politische Debatte oder "Dafür"- und "Dagegen"-Buttons - die Möglichkeiten der sich mit der Ausbreitung des Internet entfaltenden elektronischen Öffentlichkeit und deren Folgen für das politische System werden sehr unterschiedlich eingeschätzt: Gelten die neuen Informations- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten für die einen als "technology of freedom" und stehen für eine "totale Demokratisierung" der Gesellschaft, den "wohlinformierten Bürger" und die direkte Kommunikation zwischen Politiker und Wähler, sehen die anderen in ihnen eine Gefahr für oder gar das Ende der Demokratie.⁷ Manche Autoren vermuten gar, daß sich die Politik bereits heute den Bedingungen der (alten) Medien unterworfen habe (vgl. Kepplinger 1998), andere gehen davon aus, daß die neuen Medien von der "Zuschauer-" zur "Beteiligungsdemokratie" (Leggewie/Maar 1997) führen werden, wieder andere befürchten schließlich die "freiwillige Dauerüberwachung im bit-gesteuerten Morgenland" (Tügel 1996).

Dabei ist die Debatte um das Entstehen einer "elektronische Demokratie" keineswegs neu, sondern wird im Zusammenhang mit den umstrittenen Konzepten einer Informationsgesellschaft bereits seit 30 Jahren geführt (Tauss/Kollbeck/Mönikes 1996). Ausgangspunkt sind jedoch in der Regel die möglichen Gefahren der neuen Informations- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten für Individuum und Gesellschaft, nicht aber mögliche Chancen. Daher gilt es, neben den möglichen Gefahren, die die neuen Informations- und Kommunikationstechniken wie jede andere Technik sicherlich in sich bergen, auch die Optionen für die Modernisierung der demokratisch verfaßten Gesellschaft zu erkennen, die dieser gesellschaftliche Wandel mit sich bringt. Dies ist vor allem deshalb notwendig, weil allein das Beharren auf dem Status Quo nicht nur neue Optionen gar nicht erst in den Blick bekommt, sondern auch die heute kaum noch von der Hand zu weisenden Probleme nicht zu sehen vermag. Wenn man also fragen will, welche Partizipationspotentiale die neuen Techniken mit sich bringen und wie diese genutzt werden könnten, so müßten auch die bestehenden Probleme und Legitimationsdefizite moderner Demokratien Gegenstand dieses gesellschaftlichen Diskurses werden. Dies kann natürlich mit diesem Beitrag nicht geleistet werden;

⁶ Dieser Beitrag entstand in Zusammenarbeit mit meinem Mitarbeiter Johannes Kollbeck.

⁷ Der Technologierat, eines der vielen Beratergremien der alten Bundesregierung, formulierte im Jahr 1995 noch warnend: "Einerseits wird die repräsentative Demokratie in Frage gestellt, wenn jeder Bürger sich im Prinzip unmittelbar an der politischen Willensbildung beteiligen kann. Andererseits kann und darf die quasi direktdemokratische Technik die institutionellen Einrichtungen der Demokratie zur immer komplexer werdenden Entscheidungsfindung und den politischen Diskurs nicht ersetzen." (Rat für Forschung, Technologie und Innovation 1995: 48f.).

versucht werden soll aber, einige denkbare Optionen, die die neuen Informations- und Kommunikationstechniken zur Modernisierung der Demokratie eröffnen, aufzuzeigen und deren Chancen abzuwägen.

Gerade vor dem Hintergrund der oft diagnostizierten Politik- und Politikerverdrossenheit, dem abnehmenden Vertrauen in die staatlichen Institutionen, der angesichts der Komplexität zunehmenden Undurchschaubarkeit politischer Entscheidungsstrukturen und -prozesse und schließlich angesichts der immer weiter abnehmenden Wahlbeteiligung vor allem bei Landtags- und Kommunalwahlen (vgl. hierzu Kepplinger 1998) stellt sich immer drängender die Frage, wie diesen daraus entstehenden Legitimationsdefiziten begegnet werden könne - sie bezeichnen Symptome einer gesellschaftliche Entwicklung, worauf auch die zuständige Politikwissenschaft noch Antworten sucht: "Das Wahl- und Parteiensystem, auf das sich die empirischen und analytischen Anstrengungen der politikwissenschaftlichen Forschung beziehen, bindet heute vielleicht noch drei Viertel der wahlberechtigten Bevölkerung. Der Anteil der Nichtwähler liegt bei Landtagswahlen in der Größenordnung des Stimmenanteils des jeweiligen Wahlsiegers. Von der erwachsenen Bevölkerung sind zugleich immer weniger Bürger wahlberechtigt. Dies ist eine Folge des steigenden Ausländeranteils und der restriktiven Gesetze für Einbürgerung und Wahlberechtigung. Bei Kommunalwahlen sinkt daher der Anteil der Wahlbeteiligung bezogen auf die erwachsene Wohnbevölkerung oft unter fünfzig Prozent." (Seibel 1997) Auch bei Bundestagswahlen ging die Wahlbeteiligung Ende der achtziger und Anfang der neunziger Jahre leicht zurück, wenn auch weit weniger dramatisch, als die Rede von der Politik- bzw. Politikerverdrossenheit vermuten ließ.⁸ So blieb in den Jahren 1990 und 1994 jeder fünfte Wahlberechtigte der Urne fern, gleichwohl war bei der letzten Bundestagswahl 1998 wieder ein Ansteigen der Wahlbeteiligung auf etwas über 82 Prozent zu verzeichnen (Kürschners Volkshandbuch 1998). Interessant sind Meldungen aus den USA, wonach insbesondere bei jüngeren Wählerschichten die elektronische Möglichkeit der dort üblichen "Wählerregistrierung" zumindest bei der ersten Wahl Clinton/Gore einen Stimmenschub beschert haben soll.

Damit stellt sich die Frage, ob die neuen Informations- und Kommunikationstechniken einen Beitrag zum Abbau des daraus resultierenden Legitimationsdefizites leisten können. Die Enquete-Kommission des 13. Deutschen Bundestages "Zukunft der Medien in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft - Deutschlands Weg in die Informationsgesellschaft", die gemäß ihrem Einsetzungsbeschluss die Aufgabe hatte, (Deutscher Bundestag 1995) die "künftigen Entwicklungen und Folgen der elektronischen Medien und Informationstechnologien sowie der neuen Möglichkeiten einer Nutzung der Informations- und Kommunikationstechnik" in den unterschiedlichen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen darzustellen und "Handlungsbedarf" und "Handlungsmöglichkeiten der staatlichen Politik" aufzuzeigen, hat sich auch mit den neuen Formen der Beteiligung der Bürger an der politischen Willensbildung beschäftigt. Dabei hat sie - wie die öffentliche

⁸ An der ersten Bundestagswahl im Jahr 1949 nahmen nur 79 Prozent der wahlberechtigten Bevölkerung teil, bis zum Jahre 1976 stieg die Wahlbeteiligung auf bis zu 91 Prozent an und ging bei der Bundestagswahl im Jahre 1994 auf 79 Prozent zurück. (Vgl. Kepplinger 1998, vgl. auch SPIEGEL-Spezial 1994).

Debatte insgesamt - den Fokus noch immer in erster Linie auf Fragestellungen wie "Bereitstellung, Verteilung und Aufnahme politischer Informationen"⁹ oder "Effizienzsteigerung von Parlamenten, Regierungen und Verwaltungen" gerichtet (Deutscher Bundestag 1998: 179ff.). Natürlich sind auch dies wichtige Themenstellungen, jedoch wird mit dieser Fokussierung das Spezifische und das eigentlich Neue der sog. Neuen Medien - die Möglichkeit der Interaktivität - von vornherein ausgeblendet und damit auch die möglicherweise entstehenden neuen Möglichkeiten und Formen der politischen Teilhabe.

Dennoch ist es der Parlamentskommission gelungen, erste Ansätze auch in diese Richtung aufzugreifen und zu bearbeiten. So empfiehlt sie in ihrem Vierten Zwischenbericht (Deutscher Bundestag 1998b: 81), der sich mit Fragen der IT-Sicherheit, des Datenschutzes und des Strafrechtes auseinandersetzt: "Auch die Ermöglichung einer informationstechnisch sicheren Wahl neben der heutigen Urnen- und Briefwahl könnte einen großen Beitrag zur besseren Akzeptanz [der neuen Informations- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten, Anm. d. Verf., JT] leisten." Wenn hier noch offen gelassen wird, bei welchen Wahlen auch die elektronische Stimmabgabe ermöglicht werden sollte, geht die Kommission in ihrem Schlußbericht (Deutscher Bundestag 1998a: 81) noch ein Stück weiter: "Bei Bundestagswahlen sollte das Angebot gemacht werden, künftig in Ergänzung zur Urnen- und Briefwahl unter Gewährleistung von Datenschutz und Datensicherheit auch per Internet zu wählen. Allerdings muß sichergestellt sein, daß freie und geheime Wahlen auch bei der elektronischen Stimmabgabe gewährleistet sind." Weiter heißt es, daß die "internationale Diskussion, die unter dem Begriff 'elektronische Demokratie' abläuft" aufmerksam zu verfolgen sei und daß es wünschenswert wäre, daß in "überschaubaren Einheiten, wie zum Beispiel Universitäten, bei denen der allgemeine Zugang zu Computern und Netz gewährleistet ist, eine Erprobung elektronischer Verfahren erfolgt" (Deutscher Bundestag 1998a: 85). Nun geht es zwar mit der Ermöglichung der elektronischen Stimmabgabe weniger um die Vergrößerung der Akzeptanz gegenüber technischen Innovationen sondern vor allem um die Nutzung möglicher neuer Formen der Partizipation. Angesichts der heftigen Debatten, die es innerhalb der Kommission gerade zum Thema "elektronische"

⁹ Jedoch geht es - gerade vor dem Hintergrund der Legitimationskrise - nicht allein um die schnelle und umfassende Verfügbarkeit von politisch relevanten Informationen für den Bürger. Bereits seit Jahren ist auch vom "Informationsvorsprung der Exekutive" und der gleichzeitigen "Informationskrise des Parlamentes" die Rede. Da diese Problematik hier nicht ausführlich diskutiert werden kann, nur folgende kurze Anmerkung: Auch hier sollte mittels neuer Informations- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten Abhilfe geschaffen werden. Um dieses Ungleichgewicht zwischen Regierung und Parlament - immerhin deren Kontrollorgan - abzubauen, sollten mit dem System PARLAKOM (Parlamentarisches Informations- und Kommunikationssystem), welches in den 80er Jahren eingeführt wurde, folgende Ziele verwirklicht werden: Zugriff auf Daten in Ministerien, Zugriff auf Datenbanken in Ausschüssen, Zugriff auf Datenbanken der Fraktionen, Anbindung an Pressedienste und an den Wissenschaftlichen Dienst des Deutschen Bundestages, elektronische Kommunikation zwischen Bundestags- und Wahlkreisbüros, etc. (Vorwerk, Bahr, Dieckhoven et al. 1986). Schaut man sich etwas mehr als zehn Jahre später an, was davon in der Zwischenzeit realisiert wurde, so fällt auf, daß die Abgeordnetenbüros zwar neben e-Mail inzwischen Zugang zu Pressediensten und seit einigen Monaten auch zu Ausschußinformationen haben. Wichtiger aber ist, daß die keines Projekte, die auf die Kontrolle der Regierungsarbeit abzielten (z.B. Zugriff auf Datenbanken der Ministerien, etc.), verwirklicht wurde (vgl. auch Bernhardt/Ruhmann 1996: 45).

oder, vielleicht richtiger, "digitale Demokratie" gab, ist es jedoch schon als Erfolg zu werten, daß eine solche Passage überhaupt Eingang in einen Kommissionsbericht gefunden hat.

Ob die elektronische Stimmabgabe wirklich sofort bei Bundestagswahlen erprobt werden sollte, oder ob zunächst auf einer kleineren Ebene und in kleineren Einheiten mit den neuen Beteiligungsmöglichkeiten und -formen experimentiert werden sollte (z.B. in den virtuellen Gemeinschaften wie dem Virtuellen Ortsverein der SPD, in Universitäten und Unternehmen oder den ersten digitalen Städten), sei zunächst dahin gestellt - zum Teil wird in diesen Projekten die "elektronische Demokratie" ja bereits heute erprobt. Entscheidend ist, daß auch die Politik die neuen Möglichkeiten und Formen des direkten Austauschs mit und der Beteiligung der Bürger an der politischen Willensbildung anerkennt, ernst nimmt und zu nutzen bereit ist (vgl. Tauss 1998). Drängender als die Ermöglichung einer elektronischen Stimmabgabe bei einer Bundestagswahl stellt sich m.E. die Frage, ob und inwieweit beispielsweise "Televoten" - als eine "wissenschaftliche" Methode der interaktiven und abwägenden Meinungsbefragung mittels neuer Informations- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten (Slaton 1998) - genutzt werden könnten und wie sich beispielsweise die neuen Techniken eignen, virtuelle Anhörungen (etwa der in der Regel nicht-öffentlich tagenden Bundestagsausschüsse) oder auch kommunale Planungsverfahren (z.B. GMD-Projekt Bonn/St. Augustin) öffentlich zu machen und zur Beteiligung der betroffenen Gruppen einzuladen - etwa im Sinne eines *call for paper* während der parlamentarischen Beratung neuer Gesetze. Formuliert sind in dem Kommissionsbericht jedoch bereits sehr präzise die Bedingungen, unter denen die "elektronische Briefwahl" eine wichtige Erweiterung der Beteiligungsformen der Bürger darstellen kann: So muß zum einen der Grundsatz der freien und geheimen Wahl garantiert werden, zum zweiten muß der Sicherheit und der Schutz der Daten (erst recht in globalen Datennetzen) garantiert sein.

2 e-Vote - Voraussetzungen einer "elektronischen" Stimmabgabe

2.1 Rechtliche Bedingungen

Vergleichbar mit der Möglichkeit der elektronischen Stimmabgabe ist die im Wahlgesetz bereits vorgesehene Möglichkeit der Briefwahl, also der postalischen Wahl (Fernwahl) (Schreiber 1997). Von Wahl zu Wahl ist in den vergangenen Jahren der Anteil der Briefwähler gestiegen. Bei den Bundestagswahlen 1994 hatten 6,4 Millionen oder 13,4 Prozent der Wähler ihre Stimme per Briefwahl abgegeben (FAZ vom 16.09.98: 1), bei ihrer Einführung im Jahr 1957 waren es nur 4,9 Prozent. Bei der Bundestagswahl 1998 ist durchweg von einer weiteren Zunahme des Anteils der Briefwahl auszugehen.¹⁰ So waren bereits zwei Wochen vor dem Wahltermin annähernd ebenso viele Briefwahanträge eingegangen wie bei der Wahl im Jahr 1994 insgesamt, allein in Berlin stieg die Zahl der Briefwähler von 12,2 auf 16,4 Prozent (TAZ vom 28.09.1998: 21).

¹⁰ Für die Bundestagswahl 1998 liegen nach Angabe des Statistischen Bundesamtes in Wiesbaden die Zahlen über den Anteil der Briefwähler noch nicht vor.

In Verbindung mit der Höhe der Wahlbeteiligung zeigen diese Zahlen - wenn man vom Rückgang der Wahlbeteiligung bei den Bundestagswahlen 1990 und 1994 zunächst einmal absieht, für die sich auch andere Gründe anführen ließen -, daß das geltende Wahlrecht "in der Form der Kombination Urnen-/Wahlgeräte-/Briefwahl die Teilnahme an der politischen Willensbildung des Volkes durch Wahlen in bester Weise ermöglicht" (Schreiber 1997: 480).

Die Briefwahl eröffnet letztlich potentiell allen wahlberechtigten Staatsbürgern die Möglichkeit der Wahlrechtsausübung, indem sie auch denjenigen Wahlberechtigten die Teilnahme an der Wahl erlaubt, die sich am Wahntag nicht in ihrem Wahlkreis oder ständig außerhalb des Bundesgebietes aufhalten oder aus Alters-, Gesundheits- sowie anderen wichtigen Gründen "verhindert" sind, persönlich ihre Stimme in ihrem Wahlbezirk abzugeben. Damit trägt die Briefwahl dem Grundsatz der Allgemeinheit der Wahl in besonderem Maße Rechnung.

Dabei hat es der Gesetzgeber neben den hohen formalen Anforderungen auf Verwaltungsseite weitgehend dem Wahlberechtigten selbst überlassen, in seinem Lebensbereich dafür zu sorgen, daß das Wahlgeheimnis und die Wahlfreiheit gewahrt bleibt (vgl. zu den rechtlichen Voraussetzungen der Briefwahl ausführlich Schreiber 1997: 479-493).

Während die Briefwahl in der juristischen Diskussion verschiedentlich als verfassungsrechtlich bedenklich angesehen wird, hat das Bundesverfassungsgericht - und ihm folgend die übrige Rechtsprechung - sie als verfassungskonform und insbesondere nicht gegen die Grundsätze der freien und geheimen Wahl verstoßend beurteilt (vgl. Schreiber 1997, BVerfGE Bd. 21 und Bd. 59, zur Problematik des Anstiegens der Briefwähler vgl. vor allem BVerfGE Bd. 59). Bei der ständigen Zunahme des Anteils der Briefwahl wird es jedoch nur eine Frage der Zeit sein, wann die Debatte um ihre Verfassungsverträglichkeit erneut auf der Tagesordnung steht, war diese Möglichkeit doch explizit als Ausnahmefall konzipiert. Zu bedenken ist hierbei allerdings - und Erfahrungen mit steigender Wahlbeteiligung bei der Ermöglichung der Wahl über weite Entfernungen (Post, Telephon, Internet) in anderen Staaten belegen diese Vermutung -, daß eine höhere Wahlbeteiligung auch eine höhere Legitimation und Akzeptanz bedeuten kann. Soll in Zukunft die Möglichkeit der elektronischen Stimmabgabe gleichberechtigt neben der Urnen- und Briefwahl gewährt werden, müssen hierfür vergleichbar hohe Voraussetzungen wie bei der Briefwahl geschaffen werden.

2.2 Informationstechnische Voraussetzungen

In ihrem vierten Zwischenbericht "Sicherheit und Schutz im Netz" hat sich die Parlamentskommission ausführlich mit den Gefährdungen der Informationsgesellschaft und den technischen und rechtlichen Lösungsansätzen auseinandergesetzt (Deutscher Bundestag 1998b). Dabei hat sie sich vor allem mit den Schutzziele der IT-Sicherheit und des Datenschutzes zur Wahrung der Verfügbarkeit, Integrität, Vertraulichkeit, Unbeobachtbarkeit, Transparenz, Interoperabilität und Zuordenbarkeit und den hierfür entwickelten technischen Systemen (Digitale Signatur, Verschlüsselungssysteme, Sicherungsinfrastruktur) sowie den zu schaffenden rechtlichen Rahmenbedingungen

beschäftigt. Für die hier zur Rede stehende elektronische Stimmabgabe sind vor allem die neuen Möglichkeiten der Manipulation von digitalen Daten, die Anonymität i.S. der Nicht-Zurückverfolgbarkeit von "Wählerstimmen" (gläserner Bürger!), die Integrität und Authentizität der abgegebenen "Wahlzettel" und die Unbeobachtbarkeit des Wahlaktes von besonderem Interesse.

Die Ermöglichung einer elektronischen Stimmabgabe setzt eine Sicherungsinfrastruktur voraus, die das Wahlgeheimnis und die Freiheit der Wahl im Sinne des Art. 38 Abs. 1 GG garantiert, wie dies bei der Briefwahl gewährleistet ist. So wie hier die Initiative des Wahlberechtigten (Antragstellung) vorausgesetzt wird, die Ausstellung des Wahlscheins (Vermeidung der "Doppelwahl") Mißbrauch verhindern soll und die Versicherung an Eides Statt (persönliche Ausübung des Wahlrechts) den Grundsätzen der geheimen und freien Wahl gerecht zu werden sucht - um nur die wichtigsten Regelungen aufzugreifen - , müßten solche Strukturen zuvor auch für die elektronische Stimmabgabe geschaffen werden.

Die Kommission hat darüber hinaus empfohlen, zu prüfen, "ob und inwieweit durch Pilotprojekte und gesetzliche Experimentierklauseln die Erprobung neuer technischer und organisatorischer Sicherheitsvorkehrungen für genau umrissene Anwendungsbereiche und für einen klar umrissenen Zeitraum zugelassen werden sollte" (Deutscher Bundestag 1998b: 80). Denkbar wäre beispielsweise, an Universitäten oder aber im Rahmen des Projektes "Schulen ans Netz" - ein möglichst hundertprozentiger Zugang zu den neuen Informations- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten vorausgesetzt - derartige Wahl-Pilotprojekte durchzuführen.¹¹ Dabei hat die Kommission zugleich auf den enormen Forschungsbedarf zu Fragen der Sicherheit und des Schutzes der Informations- und Kommunikationstechnik verwiesen, was sowohl für die Entwicklung der Technik, der Sicherungsinfrastruktur und mögliche Technikfolgen gilt - eine Forderung, die für die Ermöglichung elektronischer Wahlen keine weitere Begründung bedarf.

3 Fazit

Technische Innovationen und Verheißungen einer "elektronischen Demokratie" können sicher nicht als "Königsweg" bei der Lösung von allgemeinen Problemen der Gesellschaft und der parlamentarischer Demokratie angesehen werden, sie bergen jedoch "emanzipatorische Potentiale" (Glötz 1995) in sich, die es zu erkennen und zu nutzen gilt. Die Innovationen auf dem Gebiet der Informations- und Kommunikationstechnik erweisen sich dann als demokratierelevant, wenn sie Möglichkeiten eröffnen, auf die Probleme moderner demokratisch verfaßter

¹¹ Ein Beispiel hierfür könnte die digitale Testwahl in Finnland sein, die im Vorfeld der ersten finnischen Wahlen zum Europäischen Parlament an den Schulen durchgeführt wurde, um die Fragen der informationstechnischen Sicherheit zu klären und die - bereits verfügbare - Technik zu testen. Ein derartiges Projekt in Deutschland im Vorfeld der nächsten Bundestagswahl im Jahre 2002 - etwa im Rahmen des Projektes "Schulen ans Netz" wäre eine solche Testmöglichkeit informationstechnischer Systeme und hätte zudem den Reiz, die Ergebnisse einer solchen Testwahl an deutschen Schulen den realen Wahlergebnissen gegenüberzustellen. Zugleich wäre dies ein interessanter Beitrag zur Debatte um die Herabsetzung des Wahlalters.

Gesellschaften zu reagieren. E-Vote - die elektronische Stimmabgabe - kann unter klar definierten Voraussetzungen, mit denen die Grundsätze der Freiheit der Wahl und des Wahlheimnisses garantiert werden, einen wichtigen Beitrag zum Abbau bestehender Legitimationsdefizite leisten, die sich beispielsweise aus der immer weiter zurückgehenden Wahlbeteiligung ergeben. Gleichzeitig könnte dadurch ein wichtiger Schub für die Debatte um die Sicherheit und den Schutz der neuen Informations- und Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten in globalen Datennetzen bei den privaten Nutzern und den staatlichen Verwaltungen erreicht werden.

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