



# eParticipation and eDemocracy

## Internet and Democracy

**12 July 2008: Session V**

Institut für Kommunikationswissenschaften  
Universität Bonn





# Coming up ...

---

- 10am presentation by Markus Klima  
[binary objects]
- *(Isabel: eParticipation formats)*
- 11am *Mario: ePetitions*
- evaluation of eParticipation
- **12.30pm lunch break**
- 1.30pm eDemocracy
- eDemocracy evaluation
- relevance of social network sites
- review discussion / evaluation
- 4.30pm finish



# Online consultations

---

- [Gleisdreieck Berlin](#)
- [Flughafen Tempelhof](#)
- [Bürgerhaushalt Lichtenberg](#)



# Petitions

---

- very old form of participation
  - Rome
  - UK parliament from 18th century
  - German king from late 18th century
- different receivers
  - president
  - parliament
  - ...
- right to petition without fear of prosecution
  - article 17 Grundgesetz
- not binding
- long process (in Germany, average 1 year)



# Petitioning figures

---

- UK (petitions.pm.gov.uk)
  - directly to Prime Minister
  - offline:
    - 2005: 156 petitions with 2.833.421m signatures
  - online
    - since Nov 2006: 20.000 petitions (plus 23.000 rejected) with more than 5m signatures
    - no discussion feature
    - no evaluation of petitioners (yet)
    - most popular: [road pricing](#) (1.8m signatures)
      - with [mainstream media support](#)
      - with mixed responses



# UK transport secretary on ePetitions

---



***“Whoever came up with this idea must be a prat!”***

Douglas Alexander, Feb 2007



# Petitioning figures Germany

---

- Germany
  - Petitionsausschuss des Deutschen Bundestags
  - ~ 20.000 petitions per year in total (online and offline)
- online system ([itc3.napier.ac.uk/e-petition/bundestag/](http://itc3.napier.ac.uk/e-petition/bundestag/))
  - since September 2005
  - Scottish system, includes discussion function
  - new system from autumn 2008
- 5% of all petitions are submitted online
- nature of petitions
  - around 80% aim at greater/collective/public good, not individual petition
  - 90% of online petitioners expect greater impact in political process by using this channel
  - 80% hope for more discussion



# ePetition evaluation Germany

---

- 2008 Büro für Technikfolgenabschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag and Zebralog
- differences between petitioners and general population
  - more males
  - better educated
  - **more with disabilities**
  - in general similar to findings in Scotland
  - more politically active (as indicated by party or union membership, taking part in signature efforts, approaching civil service, taking part in demonstrations)
- differences between traditional petitioners (paper) and epetitioners
  - **onliners are much younger**
  - even better educated
  - less disabled people
  - even more politically active
- success: online channel opened up a new type of petitioners
- failure
  - still not representative for general population
  - little females
  - little people without university degree
  - still unclear what happens with the discussions (no systematic use of them in parliament)



# ePetitions Scotland

---

- Carman (2006)
- *“In addition to being generally **older**, more **male** and **middle class**, petitioners also seem to be, on average, **better educated** than the average member of Scottish society.”*
- *“This would seem to indicate that the petitions system has thus far failed to engage the broader Scottish public.”*
- *“Approximately 28 percent of petitioners were not satisfied with the outcome of the petitioning process. Conversely, nearly 17 percent of petitioners are satisfied with the outcome”*



# Recap: eParticipation formats

---

- participation formats (Albrecht et al, 2008):
- *administration- oder politically-initiated*
  - information
  - consultation
  - co-operation
  - (elections / vote)
- *citizen-, NGO-, economy-initiated*
  - transparency by third parties
  - complaint / petition
  - activism / campaigns / lobbying
  - (referendum)



# evaluating eParticipation

---

- DEMO-net: the eParticipation Network of Excellence ([www.demo-net.org/](http://www.demo-net.org/))
  - about 20 research institutions in Europe
  - 2006-2010 funded by European Commission
  - scientific application and evaluation of eParticipation
- often used methods
  - surveys
  - participant observation
  - comparative analysis of practice
  - qualitative text analysis
- *“there is still a lack of indicators and methods to evaluate the real impact of (e-)participation activities”* (Kubicek et al 2007)



# eParticipation evaluation aspects

---

- who is using it
  - quantitative
  - qualitative (e.g. inclusiveness)
  - usage motivations
- effect
  - on citizens
  - on government and politicians
  - “on democracy”
- success
  - depends on initial goals
  - does it get implemented
  - satisfaction of parties involved
  - success conditions



# eParticipation evaluation

---

- politicians and administration like it
- e.g. for online dialogue in Cologne („Deine Stadt – Dein Geld“) was [UN Public Service Award finalist](#)
- *“Ihre hervorragende Leistung hat eine ausgezeichnete Berücksichtigung öffentlicher Interessen demonstriert und ich bin sicher, dass Ihr Projekt einen bedeutenden Beitrag zur Verbesserung der öffentlichen Verwaltung in Ihrem Land bildet.“*  
(from [statement](#))



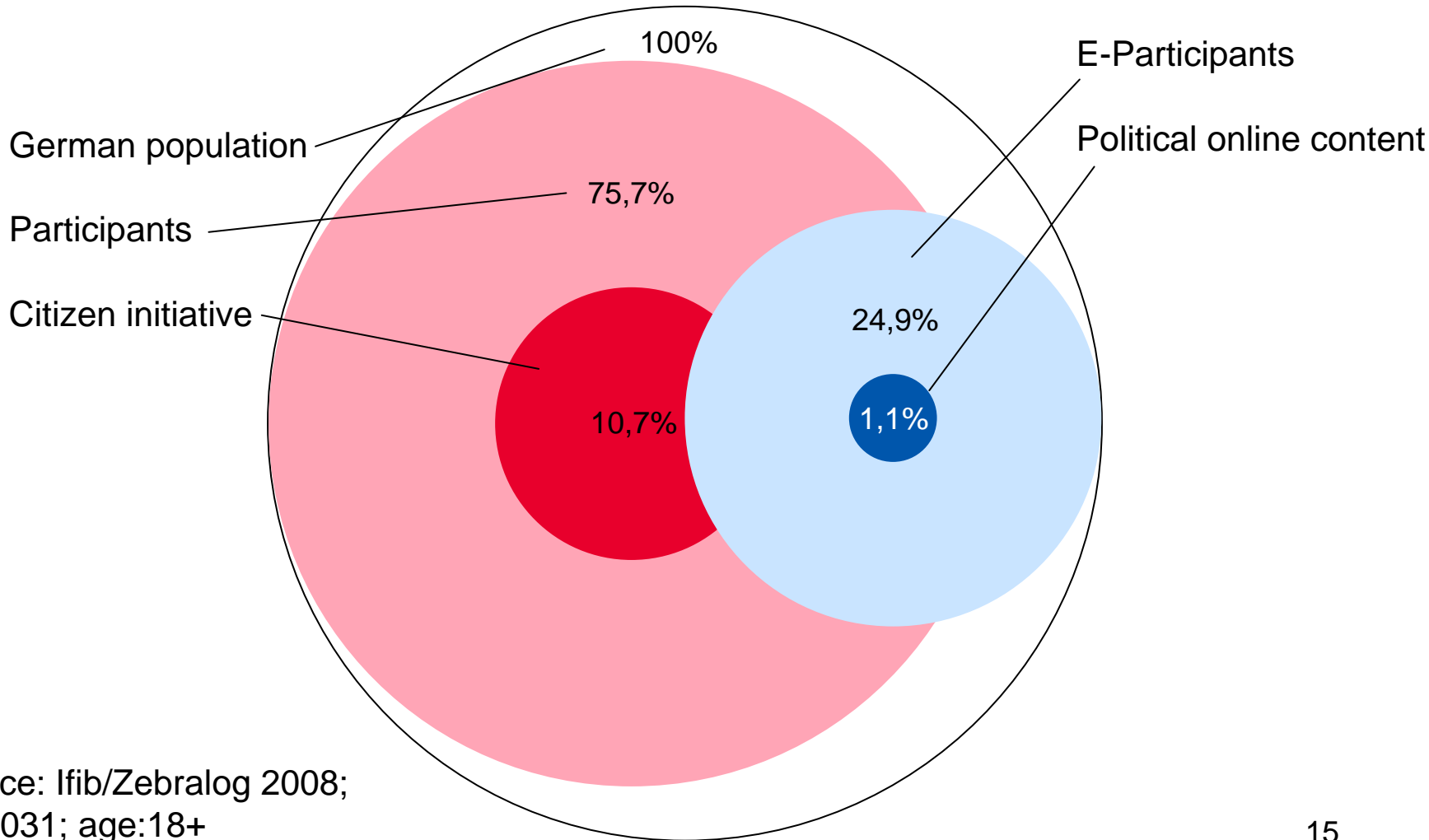
# eParticipation evaluation

---

- early research on teledemocracy (Dutton, 1992)
- government's ICT use focuses on
  - cost savings
  - additional revenue
  - efficiency gains
- *“Most of them focus on service delivery more than on teledemocracy, narrowly defined, but nevertheless hold the potential for changing the way the public interacts with candidates, officials, and public agencies by developing a new technological infrastructure that can be used for other purposes.”*



# Germany: Degree of online participation



Source: Ifib/Zebralog 2008;  
N=1.031; age:18+



# Germany:

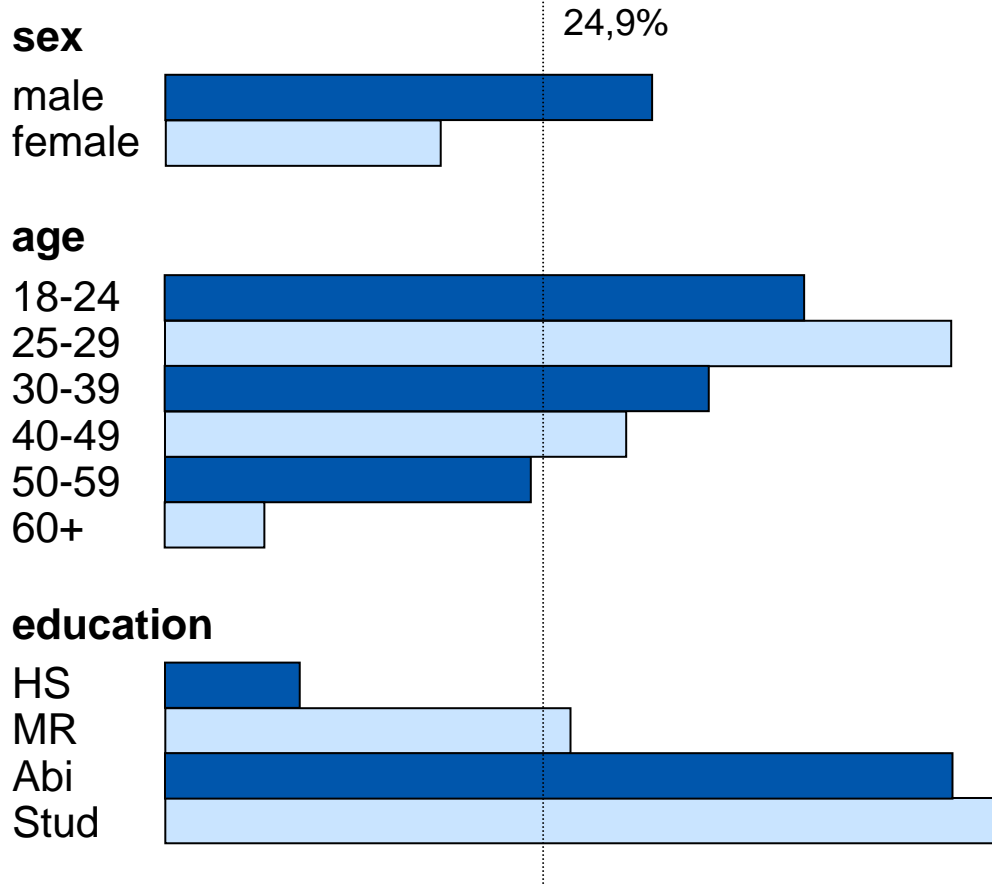
## Degree of online participation

---

- 24.9% at least one e-Participation activity
  - 20% accessed government website
  - 15% visit website of politician
  - 14% download political material
  - 7% email politician
  - 2% online petition
  - 1% own website
- >50% of German councils allow online participation (ie. comments) in planning process  
BUT: little increase in participation



# Germany: Who participates online?



Source: Ifib/ZebraLog 2008; N=1.031; age:18+



# Germany: Who participates offline?



Source: Ifib/ZebraLog 2008; N=1.031; age:18+



# Germany: Who participates online

---

- demography
  - <45 years overrepresented
  - mainly highly educated
  - male dominated
  - „Über E-Partizipation werden zunächst bestehende Unterschiede in der politischen Beteiligung reproduziert“
- Albrecht, GOR 2008
  - No increase in general levels of political participation
  - little change in inclusiveness of political participation (except: the young!)
  - No hope for changes in pattern as usage broadens
- level of government determines motivation
  - local: personal concern, expected impact
  - federal: personal interest on topic



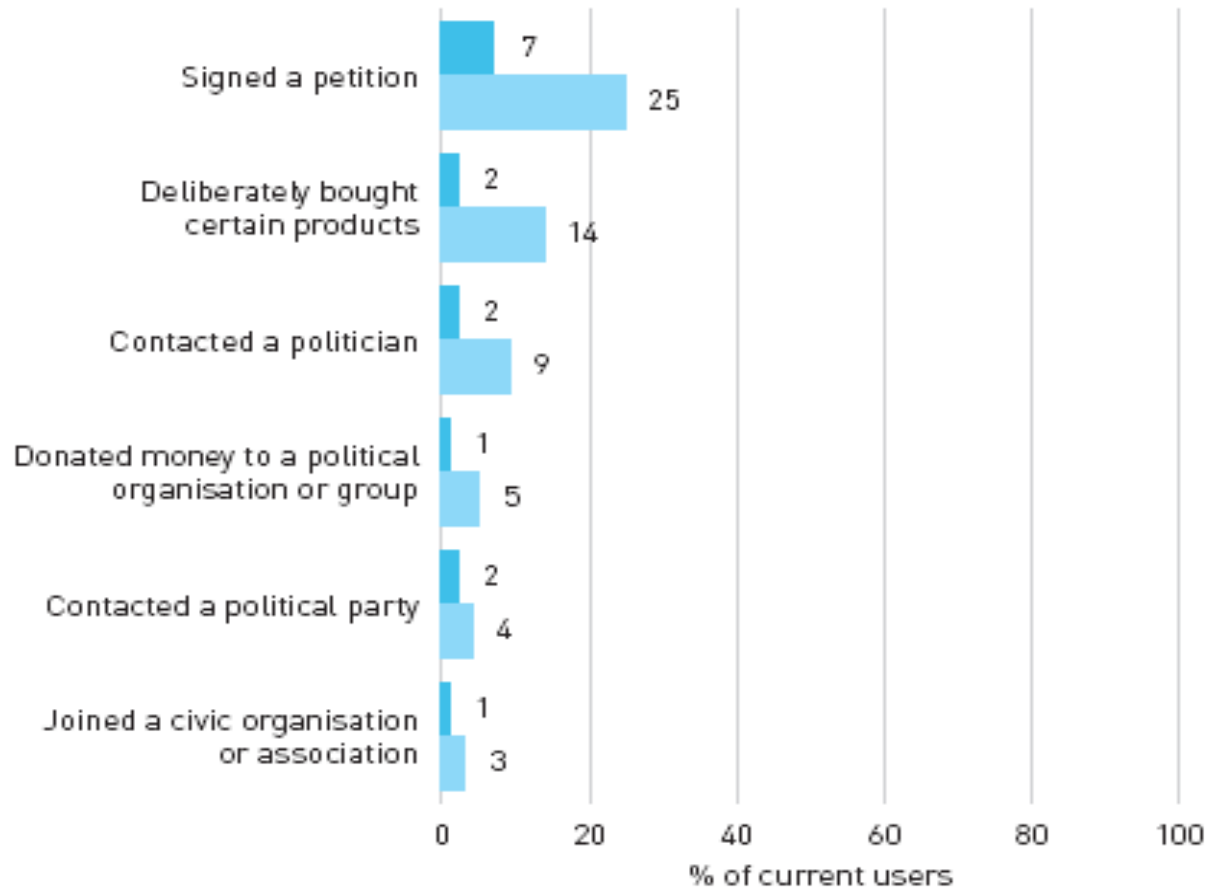
# UK:

## Degree of online participation

- OxIS 2007  
Internet users only

Online and Offline Civic Participation by Internet Users (QP2)

■ Activity undertaken online   ■ Activity undertaken offline





# UK: Who participates online?

---

- (diGennaro et al, 2006)
- *„**Inequalities** in offline political participation tend to be **reproduced** and **magnified** in online participation.“*
- *“it is not simply the case that the same people are active on- and offline. For example, only 53% of those who had engaged in politics online had also engaged in offline politics. **This means that the Internet can bring new people into the political realm.**”*



# Evaluating online discussions

---

- internal, e.g. quantitative measures of quality (according to Ternel, see Märker 2007)
  - participation
    - # of participants
    - # of messages
    - distribution of contributions
  - interactivity
    - # of answers
    - length of discussion threads
    - # of interactions
  - content analysis of nature of arguments (Märker 2007), e.g. expression vs reciprocity (listening), persuasion
- external
  - enough resources
  - visibility
  - representation of all stakeholders
  - process feedback



# UK parliament consultations

PROMOTING DEMOCRACY • STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENT



- 1998-2002: 10 online consultations of UK parliament
- run by Hansard Society, evaluation by Coleman (2004)
- aim: recruiting citizens with expertise
- evaluation of two consultations
  - domestic violence (*experience testimony*)
  - draft Communications Bill (*pre-legislative scrutiny*)
- criteria
  - inclusiveness
  - increased trust between public and representatives
  - quality of discussion
- method
  - pre- and post-survey
  - content analysis of discussion



# UK consultation results

---

- inclusiveness
  - not the usual suspects, greater inclusiveness
  - BUT: active recruiting
- interaction public – representatives
  - little contributions by MPs
  - MPs found it valuable
  - 90% of users said it was successful and they would do it again!
- quality of discussion
  - frequent citation of external sources
  - distributed participation patterns
  - high degree of interaction between participants



# UK consultation results

---

*“Online consultations are not, and will not become, a panacea for disconnection between politicians and citizens, but they do have the potential to support a more direct form of representation (in contradistinction to direct democracy) in which the public is likely to feel less unheard.”*

Coleman, 2004



# eParticipation results

---

- less participation online than offline
- in parts even more biased
  - more males
  - highly educated
  - high socio-economic status
- more young people
- once people participate
  - benefits for citizens
  - benefits for politicians
- one solution: targeted recruiting



# eDemocracy

---

- I define it: efforts by non-governmental actors (commercial/non-commercial) to
  - make information and services available to citizens
  - allow citizens to discuss/organise together and with government
  - allow citizens to take part in political process
- main problem:
  - little evaluation



# Abgeordnetenwatch.de





# Gregor Hackmack

---

- co-founder of Abgeordnetenwatch.de together with Boris Hekele
- information on members of parliament
- public questions and answers
- since launch 8.12.2006
  - 15.062 questions by citizens
  - 12.024 answers by MPs
  - 46 MPs of 612 (7.5%) do not answer at all
- funded by venture capital



# The Power of Information

---

- „*This review proposes a simple vision: **that citizens, consumers and government can create, re-use and distribute information in ways that add maximum value.***“
- economic value of PSI from
  - direct sale
    - e.g. geographic map data, land ownership
    - in UK in 2006: £590million per year
  - commercial activity it enables
    - estimate: £100 billion of activity
  - e.g. post code data
- also
  - PSI has social value (e.g. medical information)
  - citizen-generated content has economic value (e.g. travel and buying advice) as well as social value (e.g. parenting advice, health communities)
- main recommendations
  - explore and experiment with user-generated sites
  - better supply public sector information to-reusers
  - protect the public interest



# A justification to play ...

---



*“The Internet is an experience technology”*

Prof. William Dutton  
Director, Oxford Internet Institute



# eDemocracy examples

---

- a couple of websites for everyone
- 15-20mins to play around
- afterwards: tell (and show!) the others
  - What it does?
  - Which level of government is addressed (if any)?
  - Where does the data come from?
  - Who is doing it?
- we all discuss
  - Is this useful and how?
  - Is this about a better democracy?
  - What is the role of the technology?



# eDemocracy examples

---

1. <http://www.upmystreet.com/>
2. <http://www.maplight.org/>
3. <http://fundrace.huffingtonpost.com/>
4. <http://www.pledgebank.com/>
5. <http://www.fixmystreet.com/>
6. <http://www.direktzurkanzlerin.de/>
7. <http://www.opensecrets.org/revolving/index.asp>
8. <http://twitter.com/secgen>
9. <http://www.whatdotheyknow.com/>
10. <http://maps.google.com/help/maps/elections/>
11. <http://www.ich-gehe-nicht-hin.de>
12. <http://patientopinion.org.uk/>



# dimensions of eDemocracy

---

- content
  - many offer information
  - but also services
- data source
  - manual collection
  - automatic, e.g. scraping
- unique selling proposition
  - new information
  - repackaging
  - user contributions, e.g. comments, rating, ...
- relation to formal political process
  - all levels of government addressed (local, national, etc)
  - some independent of formal political process
- providers
  - commercial
  - non-commercial



# eDemocracy: Impact?

---

- little data because
  - diversity of actors involved
  - technology is cool, evaluation isn't
  - lack of resources
  - lack of users
  - difficulty of operationalizing impact



# What is impact?

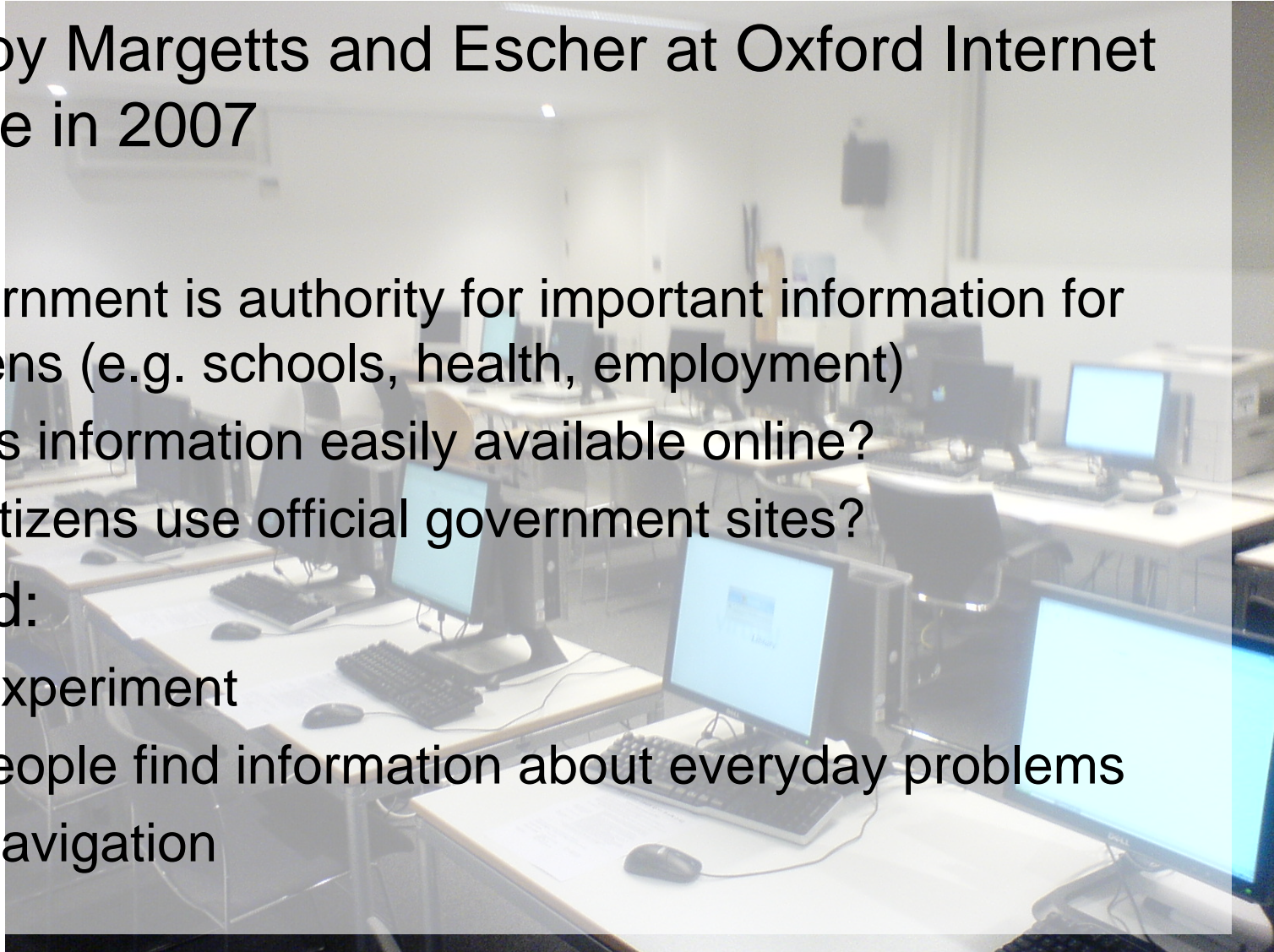
---

- number of users
- user demography (e.g. first-timers?)
- media popularity
- if there was a self-set goal, was it reached?
- PoI
  - economic value?
  - social value?
- attempt 1: government information
- attempt 2: mySociety evaluation



# Government information online

- study by Margetts and Escher at Oxford Internet Institute in 2007
- focus:
  - government is authority for important information for citizens (e.g. schools, health, employment)
  - is this information easily available online?
  - do citizens use official government sites?
- method:
  - lab experiment
  - let people find information about everyday problems
  - log navigation





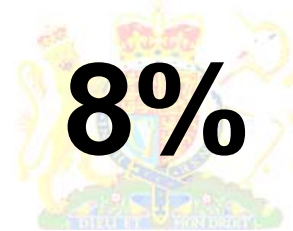
# Competition for government

## Issue

## Government Sources

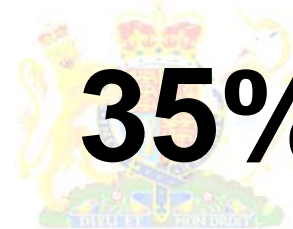
## Competitors

Can you find out how NAME OF MP voted on the war in Iraq? Did he/she support the British military action?



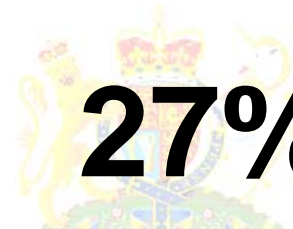
[theyworkforyou.com](http://theyworkforyou.com)  
[publicwhip.org.uk](http://publicwhip.org.uk)

You have just been diagnosed with diabetes mellitus that will have to be treated with drugs. Do you have a right to free prescriptions?



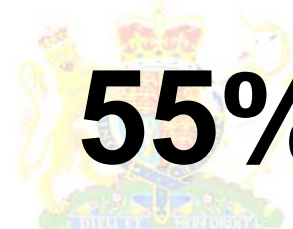
[patient.co.uk](http://patient.co.uk)

Does the SCHOOL NAME in Oxford achieve at least above average GCSE results for England?



[bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)

Is the risk to become a victim of crime (of any kind) greater in Oxford than in Britain in general?



[upmystreet.com](http://upmystreet.com)



# mySociety evaluation

---

- situation
  - huge user base (100s of thousands of visitors every month)
  - email addresses available
- focus
  - first-time users?
  - biased compared to Internet user population
- method
  - user survey (with comments)
  - visitor stats (e.g. referrals)



# Survey comments

---

- *"This is a brilliant idea and should be made known to everyone. When we take part in the political process we need to know as much as possible about the candidates."*
- *"A very good and powerful site, removing many of the stumbling blocks that prevent people contacting those in power. I think it is excellent, and my personal experience of the site was extremely good."*
- *"Keep up the good work, its a refreshing change and a positive one, the accountability of MP's and the ability to make contact with them so easily is superb and your doing a cracking job."*



# advantages of eDemocracy

---

- wisdom and creativity of the crowds
- quick and flexible / no red tape
- independent of government
- creating additional value
- user contributions / more participatory



# problems of eDemocracy

---

- trust
- accuracy
  - who guarantees the data is up to date?
  - fairness
- governmental control of source data
- relies on data being available / open standards
- sustainability
- visibility



# Potential pol. relevance of SNS?

---

1. information
  2. find out other's interest / affiliations
  3. groups / organization
  4. discussion
  5. donating money
- collective action via SNS already happening
    - Students against Facebook Newsfeed (200,000)
    - Facebook members against Beacon feature (70,000)



# Political relevance of SNS

---

- US election campaign (Pew):
  - 40% of SNS users (ie. 10% of all adults)
    - 29% discovered their friends political interests or affiliations
    - 22% got campaign of candidate information
    - 10% signed up as a friend of the candidate
    - 9% started or joined a political group



# Political use of SNS

Je bent hier: [Hyver](#) > Jan-Peter

Zoeken:

Leden

Ok

-OVERZICHT-

PROFIEL

VRIENDEN

FOTO'S

BLOG

TIPS

POLLS

GADGETS

WIE WAT WAAR



Jan-Peter (65075)

Voeg toe als vriend

Schrijf testimonial

Bookmark

Voeg toe als crush

(De)blokkeren

Google Jan-Peter

Stuur bericht

Dit is niet OK

## Profiel

1178756 x , Hyver sinds 06-05-2006

**BH'er gecheckt door Hyves Headquarters!**

(Waarom zoveel vrienden?)

**Naam:** Jan-Peter Balkenende

**Leeftijd:** 51

**Woonplaats:** Capelle Aan Den IJssel

Sonja » ?? » ?? » Jan-Peter. nieuwsgierig?

**Passions:** Hoe lastig het soms ook is, politiek blijft een passie

**Musique:** Ik maak als minister-president prachtige klassieke concerten mee, maar ik geniet ook volop van een musical zoals - inderdaad - Mama Mia

**Films:** Wag the dog

## Vrienden (65075)



Charles (13)



Maarten (185)



emmie (175)



Lindy (76)



Tomas (283)



Joris (246)



Dexter (197)



Roelien. (260)



Marije (131)

## Etc (Events, Tips & Advertenties)

### Foto's & video's

Gespot! (165)

Hyves



Fight2Bchild  
Fight2Bchild





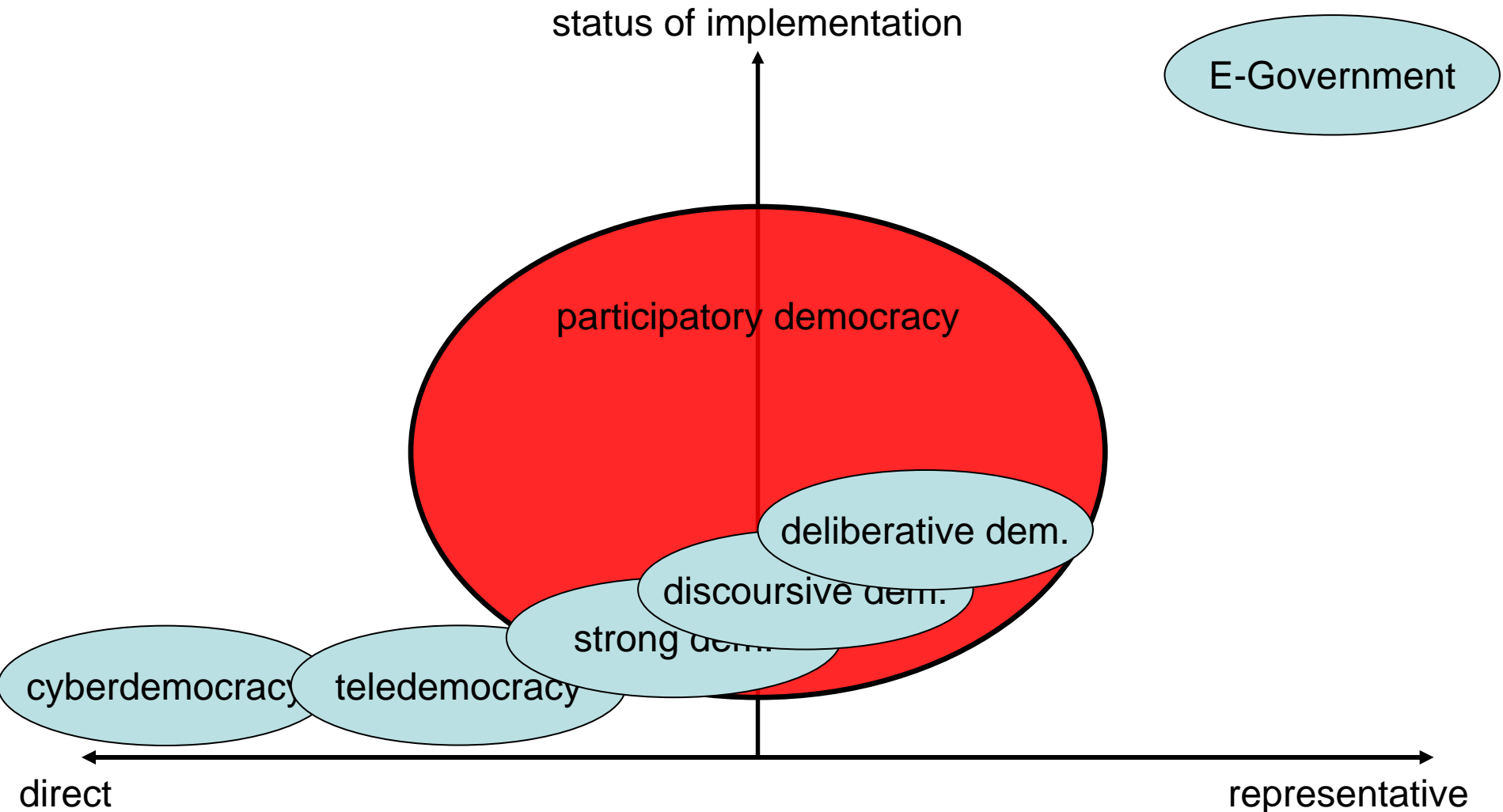
# Research by S. Utz

---

- research on Dutch SNS Hyves (7m users)
- focus: profiles of Dutch politicians during election campaign 2006
- method: online survey
- findings
  - profiles mainly visited by Hyvers who are interested in politics => *fragmentation hypothesis*
  - but: second, independent path via activity on Hyves => *unanticipated exposures (Sunstein)*
  - evaluation depends on existing preference => *further polarization*
    - suitable to further strengthen loyalty of supporters
    - less suitable to win new voters



# Which (e)Democracy?

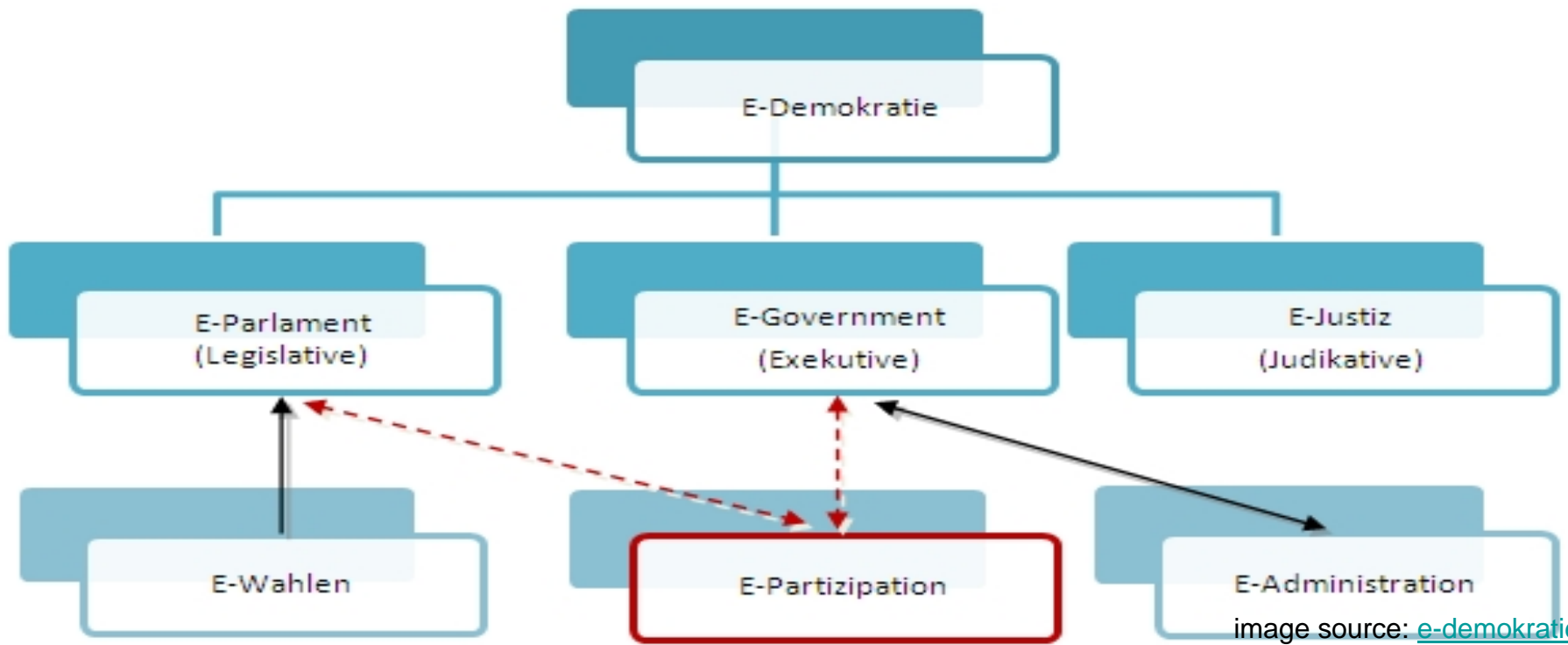
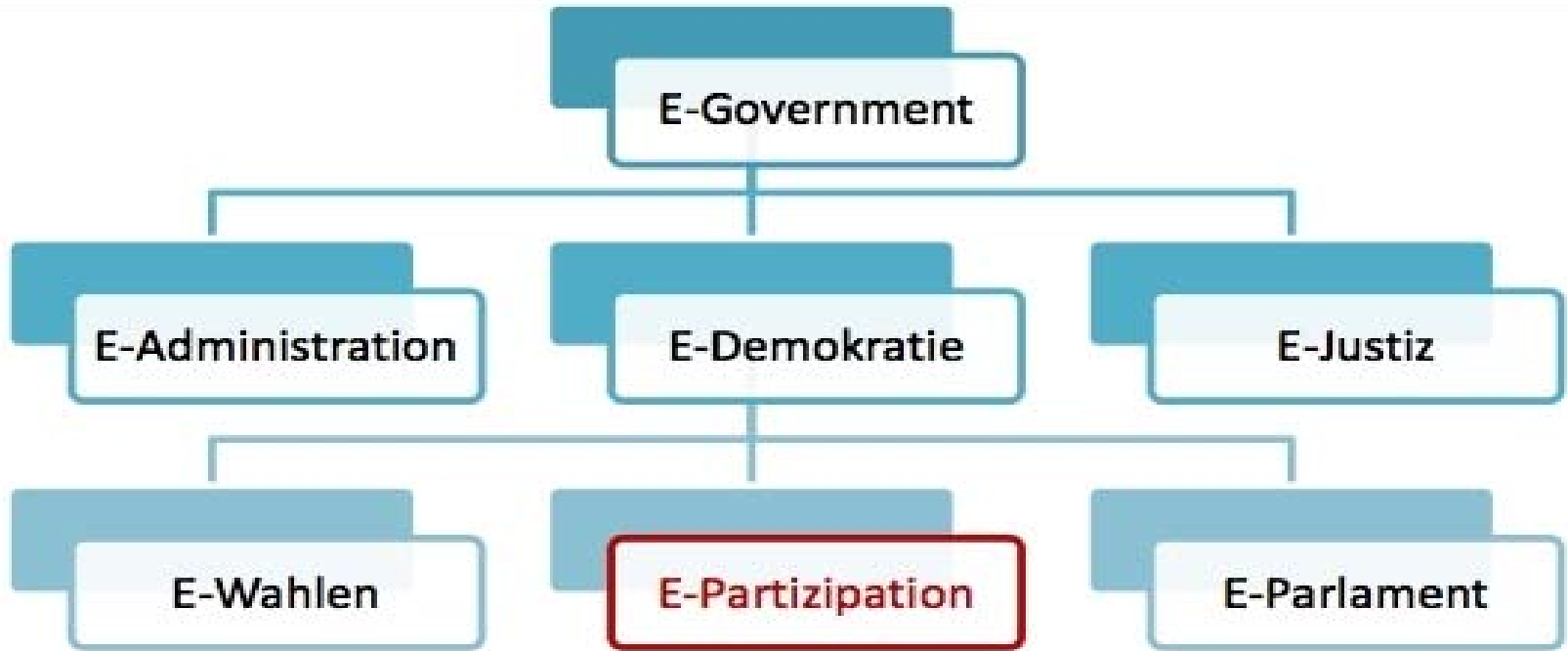




# Open questions ...

---

- What are responsibilities of governments?
  - should / can government encourage eDemocracy projects? (e.g. a la BBC Backstage)
  - should governments take part in user-generated sites?
- Is E-Government important for democracy?
  - file tax return online
  - PSI availability (e.g. map data)
- What counts as (e)-democratic / (e)-participatory?
  - transparency sites
  - community websites
  - hospital ratings
  - ...





# Looking back: Original objectives

---

- How is the Internet different from previous technologies?
- How can we research and measure effects?
- Who are and who should be the main actors for advancing democracy?
- Is it more pluralistic or are echo-chambers created?
- Is it more inclusive?
- Is government more accountable?
- Does it lead to better outcomes (e.g. policies, satisfaction, representation)?
- What are the problems associated with eDemocracy?
- What are the differences across countries?
- Does more information lead to more democracy? / Do better informed people take more action?



# Course feedback

---

1. overall structure
2. did it make sense?
3. course materials
4. difficulty
5. speakers
6. would you recommend the course to others?



# Last words ...

---

- if you want to write an essay
  - confirm topic with me as soon as possible
  - write ~25 pages (including references)
  - get it to me (by email) till 30.09.2008
  - all slides are on eCampus (with references!)
- **Thanks for listening and presenting (and waiting...)!**



# References

---

- Albrecht, S. (2008). A „Participatory Revolution“? Web 2.0 and Political Participation General Online Research 2008, Hamburg.
- Albrecht, S., N. Kohlrausch, et al. (2008). E-Partizipation – Elektronische Beteiligung von Bevölkerung und Wirtschaft am E-Government, Studie im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums des Innern, Ref. IT 1.
- Carman, C. J. (2006). The Assessment of the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions System 1999 - 2006, Scottish Parliament Information Centre for the Public Petitions Committee,.
- Coleman, S. (2004). "Connecting Parliament to the Public via the Internet." Information, Communication and Society 7: 1-22.
- di Gennaro, C. and W. Dutton (2006). "The Internet and the Public: Online and Offline Political Participation in the United Kingdom." Parliam Aff 59(2): 299-313.
- Dutton, W. H. (1992). "Political Science Research on Teledemocracy." Social Science Computer Review 10(4): 505-522.
- Escher, T. and H. Margetts (2007). Understanding Governments and Citizens On-line: Learning from E-commerce. American Political Science Association, Chicago.
- Kubicek, H., B. Lippa, et al. (2007). Deliverable 6.1 Report on state of the art approaches, relevant disciplines, key researchers, and socio-technical research issues. DEMO-net: The Democracy Network.
- Mayo, E. and T. Steinberg (2007). The Power of Information Review. Cabinet Office Report.
- Märker, O. (2007). Evaluation von E-Partizipation am Beispiel online-moderierter Verfahren. E-Partizipation: Beteiligungsprojekte im Internet. Stiftung Mitarbeit. Bonn.
- Riehm, U. (2007). Öffentliche Petitionen beim Deutschen Bundestag - Erste Ergebnisse der Evaluation des Modellversuchs. TAB Brief. Berlin, Büro für Technikfolgenabschätzung beim Deutschen Bundestag.
- Smith, A. and L. Rainie (2008). The Internet and the 2008 election. Washington, DC, Pew Internet & American Life Project.
- Utz, S. (2008). Social network sites and political campaigns: Does having 50.000 friends on Hyves pay off? General Online Research, Hamburg.