MODELS OF DEMOCRACY
AND CONCEPTS OF COMMUNICATION

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Introduction

The first chapter was a description of the historical development of the media of ICT, the Internet in particular, which gave cause for the notion of virtual democracy. Now the stage is open to some theory and conceptual clarification. What is virtual democracy? Will it change the current political systems, first of all in the Western democracies? If so, will this change be evolutionary of revolutionary? Is it unidirectional, or can we perceive more potential lines of development? When the last case appears to be true, do these lines depend upon different views of democracy and concepts of communication then, for instance stressing information supply, information demand or interactivity in politics? What is the most likely development of ICT in relation to politics and democracy in the future?

In the introduction to this book virtual democracy was defined as an attempt to practice democracy without limits of time, place and other physical conditions, using means of ICT or CMC in stead. Let's take the terms of this definition one after the other. First of all, virtual democracy is still an *attempt* to change traditional age-old ways of operation and habits in politics. It is a matter of exploration and experiment. Some people strongly believe in its potential, while others are extremely sceptical. Most often it is not a matter of scientific exploration and experiment. Cases or projects with clearly defined goals and means, so vital for any valid or reliable scientific conclusion, are exceptional. Usually it is a practise of trial and error eagerly endorsed by 'believers' who have convinced some political or public institution trying to find new ways of government and administration or management. The result is that most conclusions after these attempts are contested: the 'believers' just go on, only learning by doing, and the 'sceptics' are not even convinced by highly acclaimed successes.

Secondly, virtual democracy surely is an altogether new type of *practice* in politics, management and administration. The extent of change is underestimated most of the time. If virtual democracy would become the dominant practice, the basic culture of politics as a set of typical ways of action and communication would change substantially. In spite of the steeply rising importance of the (mass) media for politics and democracy in the twentieth century, almost every political decision is taken in meetings and face-to-face communications only accepting media as means of registration. Politics remains an oral and paper practice to a very large degree. From way back politics is a matter of verbal skills, management capacities and the art of negotiation. It is a collective routine of talkers and organisers. In virtual democracy this routine would transform into a practice of people working primarily as individuals at screens and terminals, clicking pages, reading and analysing information and posing or answering questions. It is likely to become a routine

of technical and symbolic-intellectual skill in stead of a practical-organisational and verbal- intellectual one.

The presumption of a political practice which is not bound directly to the *limits of physical conditions* is contrary to all current workings and expressions of politics. This has always been a practice strongly tied to place, time and material resources of all kinds. Often it is accused of being too slow in its reaction to current affairs and of being too much committed to local interests and financial conditions. It remains to be seen whether the sole introduction of new techniques which enable to cross barriers of place, time and material or organic conditions will reduce or radicalise the importance of these dimensions and conditions (Ferguson, 1991, van Dijk, 1991/1997). At least up till now, ICT has accelerated economic and financial processes in business networks and stock markets first of all. Anyway, ICT has not (yet) produced revolutionary changes in the basic workings of the market economy. In politics ICT is expected to (help) speed up processes of opinion formation, representation and even decision taking on account of the directness of the means of transmission. Even so, the political system of representation does not appear to be changing substantially yet. Or does it? Is the political system in the advanced democracies perhaps changing in imperceptible ways by the growing use of ICT in daily practices?

A dynamic model of the political system

To answer these questions we will have to draw a map of the political field first. Figure 2.1 supplies a system-dynamic model of politics in a broad view. In this model the political system is not restricted to government, neither to a combination of government and public administration. Their relationships with other central regulating institutions, the organisations of civil society, corporations and individual citizens cover a large part of the model. One can read the most important characteristics of Western constitutions into it: the separation of powers, the distinction between the state and civil society and the levels of (inter)national, regional and local government and public administration. Politics is broadly conceived as *the sum of acts in a community meant to organise and govern this community.*

The model proposed is a relatively neutral one. It is designed to be descriptive, not explanatory. The only assumption is a relational and dynamic conception of politics and power in general. Politics and power are not viewed as properties of individuals or collectivities as such, but as properties of the relationships between them. These relationships are made of communicative actions aimed towards the acquisition and (inter)change of material and immaterial rules and resources (c.f. Giddens, 1984). In this chapter these relationships are specified as relations of information and communication. So, this system-dynamic model is held to be different from the static functionalist theory and model of the political system like the classic one designed by David Easton (1953).
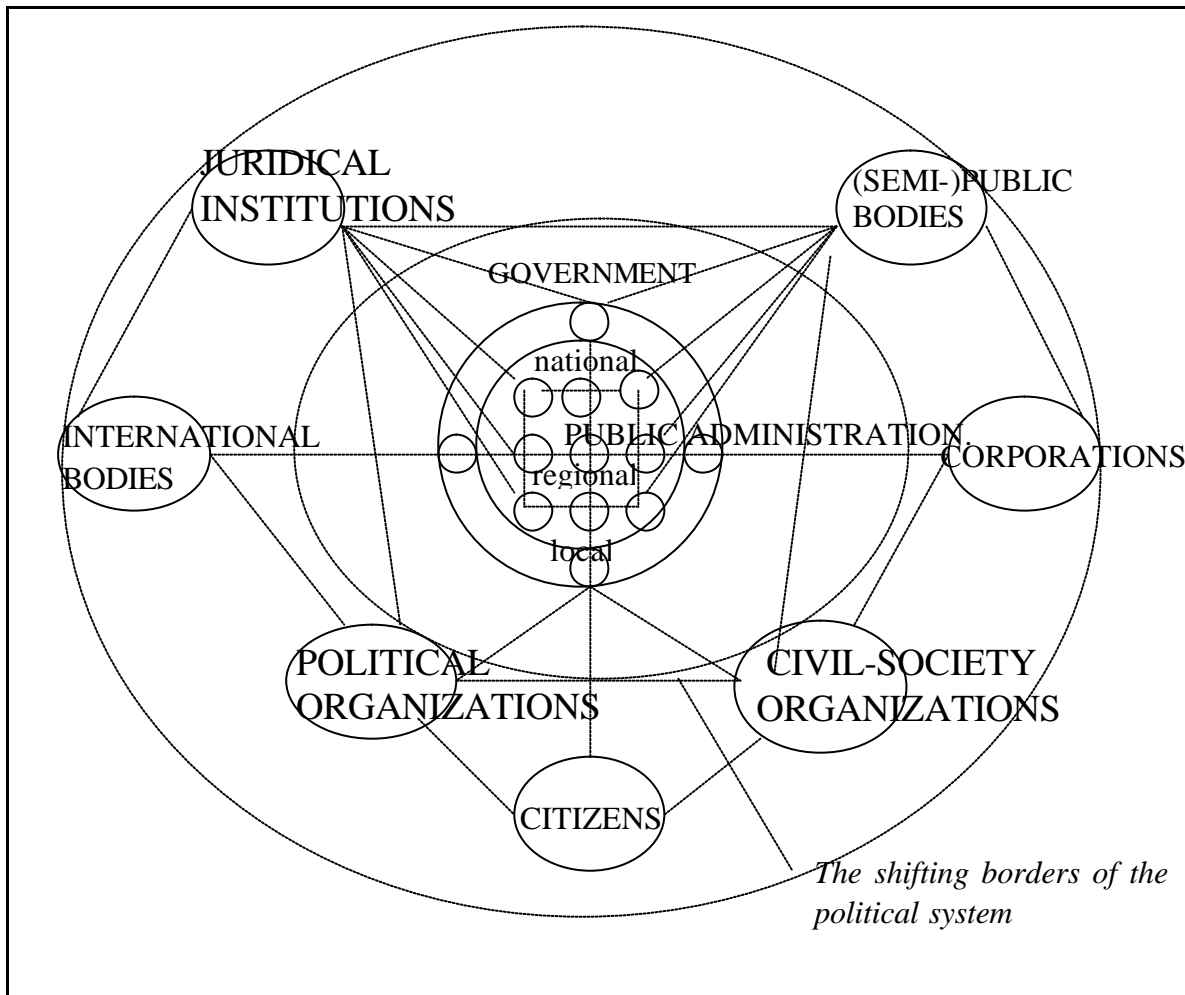
Figure showing circles labeled: JURIDICAL INSTITUTIONS, (SEMI-)PUBLIC BODIES, GOVERNMENT, national, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, INTERNATIONAL BODIES, regional, CORPORATIONS, local, POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS, CIVIL-SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, CITIZENS, *The shifting borders of the political system*

Figure 2.1: A system-dynamic model of the political system

Taking this relational view of democracy as a point of department one feels tempted to adopt a network theory of society and politics in general. In some of these theories one can find a lot of explanatory power with regard to modern society (for instance Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998) and politics (f.i. Guéhenno, 1995), but one should not reify and exaggerate the increasing importance of networks to society and politics. So, according to Castells (1996, p. 198) the modern economy and society *consist* of networks. They *are* the economy and the society. To our view networks increasingly shape the *organisation* and *structure* of society which still consists of individuals, groups and organisations with their agencies, rules, resources and (inter) relationships (van Dijk, 1991/1997). On the political field Guéhenno predicts the ends of the nation, politics and democracy as we know them as they are replaced by a relational system of networks without a significant centre. According to him citizens in social and media networks are able to associate outside the artificial and

increasingly irrelevant central institutions of traditional politics. However, he neglects the fact that networks have a centre and that they can be used by powerful central bureaucracies as well. Substantiating and inflating the formal dimension of networks (the connection), one overlooks the substantial dimension of them (the rules, resources and actions exchanged). And, contrary to McLuhan, the (medium)network is *not* the message, at least not the whole message.

The dynamic quality of the model suggested rests with the continuous substantial change of the relationships between the actors and institutions it describes. As it is a political system they are relationships of power first of all. The central proposition in this chapter is that they are increasingly shaped and materialised by means of ICT. *The use of these means changes the relationships between the parts or actors in the model.* It is still open in which direction these changes will go. Two radically opposing tendencies are both possible: a centrifugal tendency and a centralising one.

The spread and concentration of politics

The most conspicuous development of the last three decades of the twentieth century is the decentralisation or spread of politics from the modern nation state, with its institutions of government and public administration, to other actors within and without the political system. See figure 2.2 which will be explained below. National institutional politics just can not called the only political centre in society these days. Politics is spreading into society and beyond. This development is called the displacement of politics (Beck, 1992) Other actors in the political system at large with its shifting border lines - see Figure 2.1 - get involved. The system is getting *polycentric*. All centres are connected by relationships of information and communication which are supported by social and media networks. We will see that ICT makes a large contribution to this development.

The first step in the displacement of politics is the shift of power from government towards the public administration. The government is still viewed as 'the head' of society, but actually anyone can see that the executive has gained a lot of power in the twentieth century going to lead its own life in several respects. The traditional bureaucracy of the public administration has become a powerful technocracy or a so-called *infocracy* (Zuurmond, 1994) using much earlier and much stronger means of ICT than the government itself, the parliament included. The use of ICT clearly strengthens the independent weight of public administration in relationship to the government it is supposed to serve. The substantial and normative power of traditional politics loses and technocracy takes over.

The second step in the displacement of politics is the current policy in Western democracies to make independent, outsource and privatise parts of the public administration. These moves have been made possible by information systems. By this means the public administration, which is still held responsible, keeps controlling the output of these parts.

However, soon these parts are forced to survive on a competitive market. In this situation market regulation easily overtakes political regulation. With the rise of neo-liberalism in the West the national states gave away a lot of room for decisions to the market in general and the (trans)national corporations in particular. The boundless networks of ICT reinforce this development. Using these networks the transnational corporations, first of all, carry away economic decisions with a great political impact. In
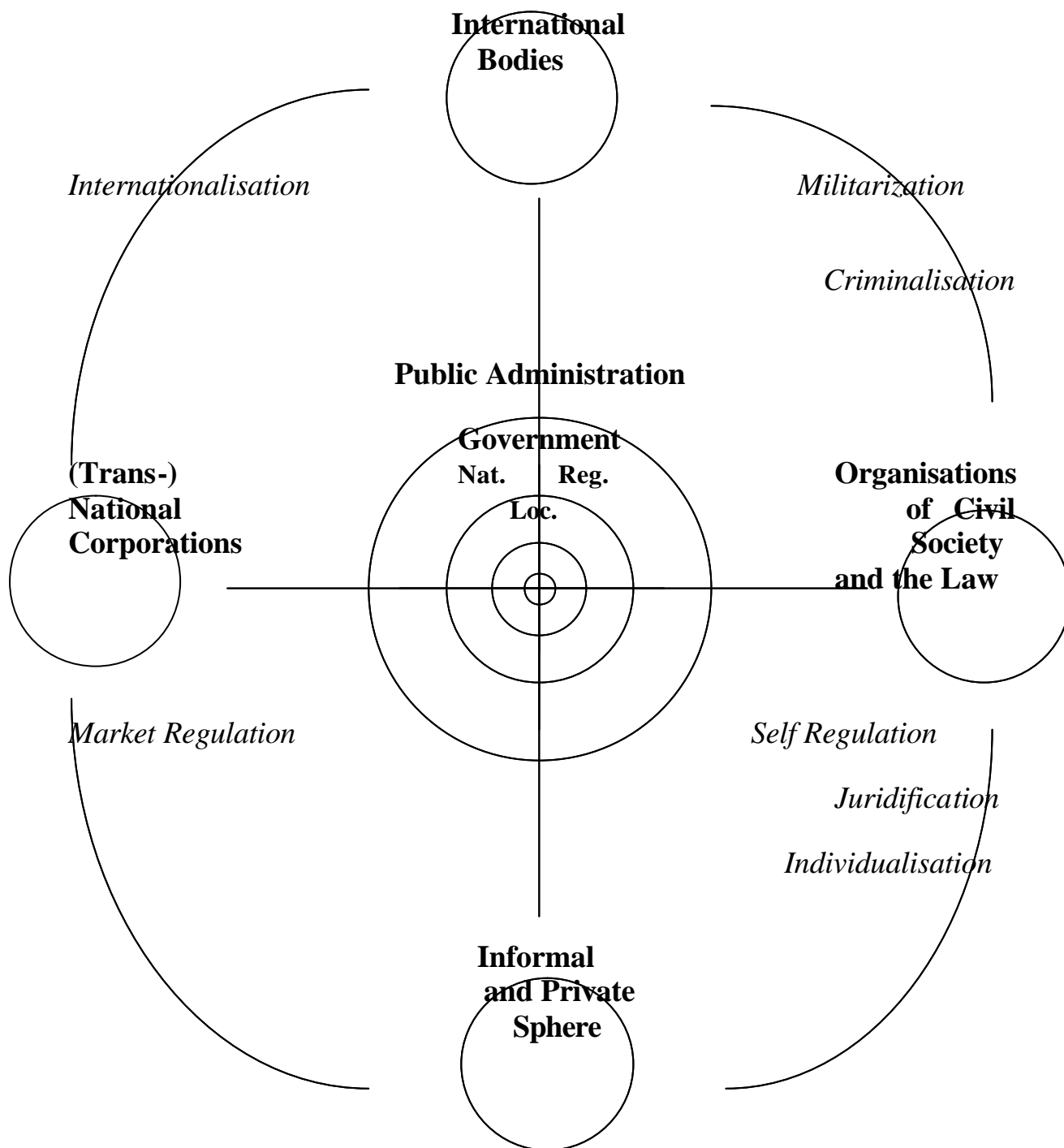
Figure 2.2: The Spread of Politics from the National State

this way political decisions are dispersed and fragmented as well. Mowshowitz (1992) speaks about *virtual feudalism*, a system clearly bypassing virtual democracy. In virtual feudalism every transnational corporation forms its own kingdom, a pseudo-political authority which is not based on the control of territory but of international production facilities co-ordinated in networks, first of all networks of ICT.

The national state is losing ground as well to international bodies giving up parts of its sovereignty and autonomy to them. In the European Union the member states transfer these parts to the Council of Ministers and the European Commission, among others backed by the so-called Schengen Information System. In the world at large we can

observe the slowly increasing role of the Security Council of the United Nations, the NATO, GATT and the regional economic block organisations like NAFTA and ASEAN. The clearest case of the impact of ICT in this development is the effect of the financial administration of the IMF and the World Bank who, by the use of their advanced information systems, are in a better position to calculate and control the budgets of developing countries than these countries themselves.

The most extreme case of a displacement of politics is the break-up of nation states in civil wars leading to narco-states and shifting territories controlled by warlords or ethnic and religious armies, usually heavy users of digital mobile communications (for example Colombia, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Bosnia and Afghanistan in 1997). It might lead to a militarization of international affairs. At the same time international criminal organisations dealing in drugs, pornography and weapons or engaging in financial fraud or terrorism are gaining ground. They use advanced information technology just as well as their opponents: the military, the police and security organisations. The American NSA, CIA and Pentagon supervise about every potential danger in the world with their advanced (satellite) networks of ICT.

These cases of a spread of politics are valued negatively in every conception of democracy (see below). The power to take decisions is shifting to non-democratic, less democratic or even anti-democratic unaccountable forces. In this prospect the future of virtual democracy looks dark, indeed. It means that ICT and virtual communication might just as well bring the opposite of democracy. However, there are some cases of a displacement of politics which are valued positively in particular views of democracy. The first one is the rise of organisations of civil society like social and cultural institutions, semi-public agencies and all kinds of pressure and interest groups in most Western countries. Among them one observes a shift from the traditional vested interests of civil society, like mainstream churches and labour movements, to the new identities and organisations of all kinds of localists, ethnic representatives, religious fundamentalists, ecologists and feminists (Castells ,1997) So, the decline of interest for institutional politics to be observed in some of these countries does not mean that the motivation of citizens to participate in political affairs more generally is decreasing as well. Perhaps the ways, channels, culture and organisation of political participation are 'only' changing. ICT networks certainly offer these new ways all kinds of opportunities and means of transmission.

In the mean time the use of ICT is strengthening the existing tendencies of individualisation, fragmentation and the rise of informal social networking in the Western countries as well. It enables organisations and individuals in their self regulation of social and political affairs. In some views of democracy this is the most desirable way to go ahead (see below). Using direct media of ICT citizens get the chance to address the centres of institutional politics immediately and, if they want so, pass these centres altogether, perhaps even trying to create their own political system.

The last type of displacement of politics to be mentioned is the juridification of conflict management in general and the workings of the government and the public administration in particular. Both the government and the public administration reveal expanding problems in controlling or managing the rising complexity and diversity of society. This is the main reason why the jurisdiction has to fill the gaps increasingly. One of the effects is the growing importance of jurisprudence which in practise often gets more important than formal legislation. As jurisprudence is summarised and made easily accessible on CD-Roms and information networks and the prospect of a more or less automatic administration of justice is taken serious by a growing number of people, ICT is

reinforcing the tendency of juridification as well.

Now we are able to return to our model of the political system. ICT *does not bring about* the centrifugal tendencies just described which can be read in this model and in Figure 2.2. One of the possibilities is that this technology *enables and reinforces* these tendencies which have their own political, social and cultural roots. In the next section we will see that they are supported by a number of views of democracy as well. Centrifugal tendencies are noticed by many observers. However, less evident and accepted are the opposing tendencies of a concentration of politics in the state, that is the government and the public administration. Still, there are at least three developments bearing this centralising movement in the political system and, what is more, they are enabled by the same technology.

The first development is the reaction of the *nation state as a whole* being under pressure, striking back and using all means to defend its position. According to Held (1995) the autonomy of states is restricted and their sovereignty are affected, but they have not disappeared. States are still the most important *single* actors in the field of global and local relationships. Their share is not diminishing as an increasing number of problems of is shifted on to the back of them : (the financial effects of) individualisation, overpopulation, ageing, migration, criminalisation, the constipation of infrastructure, the decay of the natural environment and structural employment. It can be observed that states are confronting these problems in a harder way and, among others, with the means of ICT. The registration systems of the public administration are getting more important for the citizens and the state itself. One does not have to talk about, or fear a so-called surveillance state (Burnham, 1983, Gandy, 1994, Lyon, 1995) to notice this development.

This first development is related to a second one. The state *bureaucracy itself*, as a kind of state within the state, is not helplessly standing by the centrifugal tendencies just described. The bureaucracy modernises. Most often it belongs to the first organisations introducing ICT on a large scale. Traditional bureaucracy transforms into *infocracy*. This is a mode of organisation using the networks of ICT for a clever combination of increased central control and decentralisation of executive tasks, apparently making organisations more 'flat' and actually removing lots of traditional bureaucratic ways of working (Zuurmond, id.). Connecting all kinds of networks and files in a growing number of sectors of the public administration this infocracy seems to create a highly efficient and machine-like state and a transparent citizenry as well, because many of these files contain personal information.

The third development also relates to the former ones. Reacting to the same centrifugal forces the state and institutional politics pack together creating some kind of *party state*. Increasingly the people serving the government, the public administration and (often governing) political parties exchange their places and policies among each other. This even goes for the big political parties as their active members, standing as candidates in elections seem to aspire more to a career in government or the public administration than to be a representative of the citizenry in a parliament. For many observers in society political parties appear to become a collection of office seekers. To reach this goal they transform themselves in electoral campaign organisations, exchanging their other traditional roles of being programmatic associations and bodies for citizens to organise themselves politically. Clearly, ICT serves this transformation as it is a powerful election technology (Selnow, 1994, Newman 1994). However, it is not the only way it can serve political parties or candidates. ICT can help to intermediate between political organisations and their members or voters for the purpose of association, discussion and programme

building as well. The chosen direction highly depends upon the view of democracy one supports.

Models of democracy

The large number of conceptions of democracy can only be summarised by analytical means. A successful attempt to do this has been made by David Held in his *Models of Democracy* (1987). Five of his nine ideal type models and a sixth one added may serve as an explanatory basis for views which actually can be observed in the design and use of ICT in politics (van Dijk, 1996, 1997). Two dimensions typify the differences in these models: what should be the goals and the means of democracy? Should its prime goal be *opinion formation* or *decision making*? In other words, is democracy primarily a matter of substantial input or of procedure (an output)? Should these goals be reached first of all by the ways of *representative* or *direct democracy*? The selected models of democracy can be located in this two-dimensional analytical space (Table 2.1).

PRIMARY GOAL PRIMARY MEANS	OPINION FORMATION	DECISION MAKING
REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY		LEGALIST
		COMPETITIVE
	PLURALIST	
	PARTICIPATORY	
	LIBER	TARIAN
DIRECT DEMOCRACY		PLEBISCITARY

Table 2.1: Six models in two dimensions of political democracy

A third distinction in the conceptions of democracy to be observed in the design and use of ICT in politics is the *political strategy* behind them as described in the last section: ICT may be used as a means to reinforce or reinvigorate the position of institutional politics in the system as a whole (concentration) or as a means to weaken this position and to spread politics into society or outside of the national borders of the political system. In the first two models of democracy to be described below one tries to realise the first strategy in the usage of ICT and in the last four models one practices the last-called.

Legalist democracy

The first model is based on the classical Western conception of democracy arising after the decline of the absolutist state in Western Europe. It is reflected in most contemporary constitutions. The first advocates of the legalist model were Locke (1690) and Montesquieu (1748). It is called legalist as it clearly is a procedural conception which takes the constitution and the law as the basis of democracy.

According to most contemporary constitutions state authority is separated in three powers (trias politica) controlled by a system of checks and balances. Another important principle is majority rule. This rule is taken to be universal except for particular basic rights of the individual which are also part of the constitution. In the legalist model democracy is a means to safeguard the freedom of individuals from authoritarian rule. It is not a goal in its own right. A system of representation is proposed. The heart of our political system is the judgement of heterogeneous interests and complex problems by representatives of the people. Direct democracy is rejected. Populism is feared. The power of every political institution and public administration has to be limited by the least possible, but effective rules. The system of politics and public administration has to be small and effective.

The basic assumption in this model with regard to the meaning of ICT for the political system is that it should solve its basic problem: *information shortage*. The present crisis of the political system and the nation state is viewed as the crisis of institutions which can not sufficiently deal with the increasing complexity of the environment and the system itself, as information is lacking, among others by the obstructions of traditional bureaucracy. The so-called gap between governors or administrators and citizens is also conceived as a kind of information shortage on both sides. Finally, all kinds of threats to the separation of powers and checks or balances in the system, most often caused by the rising power of the executive as compared to the legislative state, are accounted to deficiencies of information as well. It is a matter of sharing the power of information. The problem can be solved by an equal supply of the resources of information to the executive and to parliaments, municipal councils, political parties and other representatives.

So, following the legalist model ICT is designed and used as a means to remove information shortages and reinforce the present political system by more effective and efficient ways of information processing and organisation. ICT is also applied to increase the transparency of the political system. By all these means the system would be capable to confront the problems of complexity.

Which are the favourite applications of ICT following this model of democracy? (See Table 2.2 for the list referred to in this chapter.) In this model the chosen ones should serve two functions. First, they would have to supply more and better information to governors, administrators, representatives and citizens. Second, the interactivity of the new media might create a representative government which is more open and responsive to the people, not directly controlled by the people. Both functions can only be fulfilled by applications of ICT under the control of governors, administrators and representatives. The ones preferred (according to van Dijk, 1996,1997) are computerised information campaigns, civic service and information centres, mass public information systems, registration systems for the government or the public administration and computer-assisted citizen enquiries. Registration and conversation media such as electronic polls or referenda and electronic debates between

citizens are not adopted at all. They are deeply distrusted.

ALLOCUTION
        - computerised election campaigns
        - computerised information campaigns
        - computerised civic service and information centres
CONSULTATION
        - mass public information systems
        - advanced public information systems (the Internet etc.)
REGISTRATION
        - registration systems for government and public administration
        - computer-assisted citizen enquiries
        - electronic polls
        - electronic referenda
        - electronic elections
CONVERSATION
        - bulletin board systems
        - discussion lists
        - electronic mail and teleconferencing
        - electronic town halls
        - group decision support systems

Table 2.2. Applications of ICT in politics and democracy
(arranged according to communication concepts explained below)

Competitive democracy

The second model of democracy is also based on a procedural view of representative democracy. The election of representatives is considered to be the most important operation in the political system. The advocates of this model strongly reject the possibility of direct democracy. According to the best-known designers of this model, Max Weber (1921) and Joseph Schumpeter (1942), direct democracy is impossible in large, complex and heterogeneous societies. A central role for bureaucracy, political parties and leaders with authority is inevitable. Politics has to be seen as an everlasting competition between parties and their leaders for the support of the voting public. In this way the best leaders and representatives are elected. This is the solution for the problems of complexity and the crisis of the political system. It is also the main difference as compared to the legalist model which is based on a balance of executive and legislative power and on responsive representation. In the competitive model power is entrusted to leaders and experts in the executive power. They rule the apparatus of state, they weigh matters and interests against each other, they solve conflicts with negotiations and they command authority. As leadership is emphasised in this model, it is called competitive-*elitist* by Held. In one respect this is not a good label for it: populism is one of the best-known electoral strategies in this model.

      The competitive model is practised first of all in presidential states and two-party systems. It is gaining popularity in contemporary politics as the role of persons and personalities in politics grows. This role was reinforced by old media such as television and will be strengthened once again by the audio-visual new media enabling all kinds of techniques in direct mail, marketing, targeting and visual manipulation.

      The last-called facilities show the way to the design and use of ICT in politics

according to this model. First of all, ICT will be used in election and information campaigns. The voting public will be reached by a combination of television and interactive media which serve as direct channels to target a selective audience of potential voters with differential political messages. In the second place, the interested public and the electoral base of political leaders and parties should have the opportunity to get information about views, stands and voting behaviour of their leaders and representatives. So they need access to mass and advanced public information systems. Finally, the registration systems of the government and the public administration are vital to a strong and efficient state authority. Other means of registration and conversation, such as electronic polls and town halls, are only used for the benefit of the political leadership. Their resemblance to direct democracy is deceptive. For instance, the electronic polls, conferences and interactive television shows in the campaign of the American presidential candidate Ross Perot in 1992 and 1996 were means to boost the popularity of this leader in his competition with other candidates in the first place (Selnow, 1994, Newman, 1994).

Plebiscitary democracy

The design and use of direct channels of communication between the political leaders and the citizenry can be transformed into an altogether different view of politics and democracy. In this case these channels are not used to strengthen the position of governors, politicians and administrators, but to amplify the voice of the citizenry. This is the central tenet of the plebiscitarian model of democracy. It is based on notions of direct democracy as a way of decision making. According to the plebiscitarian views the decisions in the political system should be taken as less as possible by representatives and as much as possible by individual citizens by means of plebiscites. For these radical views the supposed democracy of the Athenian agora and the Roman forum, revived in some late-medieval Italian city states, have always been the prime source of inspiration. Anyway, they were for the Founding Fathers of the American constitution, like Thomas Jefferson.

The advent of ICT and the new interactive media stimulated a renaissance of plebliscitarian views in the United States from the sixties onwards. The concept of *teledemocracy* was invented. Many local experiments have been waged (see Arterton, 1987). In these experiments old and new media were (re)designed and used to open channels between the local government or administration and individual citizens. Well-known American experimenters were Becker (1981) and Barber (1984). They set their hopes on the technical capacities of the new media. They would be able to remove the age-old practical barriers of direct democracy in a large, complex society. The political primacy of the government and institutional politics, already in a state of crisis, would not have to be saved. A political system based on a continuing registration of the peoples will and, for some advocates, the will of consumers on the market as well, might be able to replace this role and this primacy.

Following the plebiscitarian model the logical preferences in ICT are registration systems of the votes and opinions of citizens. Telepolls, telereferenda and televotes by means of telephone and computer networks, two-way cable television or future information highways are the favourite applications. As a well-known criticism of this conception of democracy points at the risks of a individualisation and atomisation of the citizenry and a

simplification of issues, conversation applications are added sometimes. This means the design of electronic town halls, teleconferencing and other new discussion channels. Of course, consultation of mass and advanced public information systems by citizens themselves can not be discarded either. However, all systems filled with information by institutional politics are distrusted.

Pluralist democracy

In the competitive, legalist and plebiscitarian models of democracy nothing seems to exist between the state and the political representation on the one hand and the individual citizen on the other. In the pluralist model, to the contrary, attention is called to the role of the intermediary organisations and associations of civil society. Alexis de Toqueville (1835/1864) observed the conspicuous role of these organisations in the American democracy of the eighteenth century. Robert Dahl (1956) did the same about a century later, depicting a political system based upon a representation of competing and negotiating interest-, pressure-, religious- and ethnic groups or political parties. According to this view the political system should consist of many centres of power and administration. A network conception of politics is favoured as opposed to the centralist views in the legalist and competitive models (a pyramid of representation).

In the pluralist model democracy is not the sovereign power of the majority but an always shifting coalition of minorities. The state should act as an arbiter. If it is supposed to put the different parties in an equal position by some kind of social policy, you have a progressive type of pluralist democracy. If it is supposed to refrain from doing this, you meet a conservative type of it. So, the pluralist model is a combination of direct and representative democracy. Representation is made continually, not only by professional politicians selected every four or five years, but by all kinds of organisational representatives as well. The constitutional state can be accepted, but its real substance and resources are produced by the intermediary organisations of civil society. In Western Europe the most frequent result was some kind of corporatist state. The words 'substance' and 'resource' indicate that substantial democracy is preferred to a procedural conception. Ultimately, opinion formation in civil society, based on interests, discussions and all kinds of views, is more important for democracy than decision making in the central state.

Two characteristics of the new media are very attractive to this model of democracy. First, the multiplication of channels and stand-alone media supports the potential pluriformity of political information and discussion. Every view and every organisation or association can have its say. They can reach their own and every other interested audience. Second, interactive communication networks perfectly fit to a network conception of politics, in contrast to broadcasting networks.

Following these two general preferences all applications which can be used to reinforce information and communication inside the organisations of civil society or between them will be favoured. They are applications to inform and to register their membership and external audiences like mass and advanced public information systems, registration systems and computerised self-surveys inside organisations. However, the most favourite instruments to a pluralist model of democracy are conversation systems inside or between organisations, associations and individual citizens: electronic mail, discussion lists, teleconferencing and

decision support systems for the most complex problems.

Participatory democracy

The fifth model of democracy to be described is close to the pluralist model in several aspects. It is a combination of representative and direct democracy. It is based on views of democracy emphasising the substantial aspects and resources of democracy even more than the pluralist model. The big difference is the shift in attention from organisations to citizens. The support of *citizenship* is the central aim in the model of participatory democracy. Jean Jeacques Rousseau is the first classical advocate of this model. He can be considered as a proponent of direct democracy, but not in its plebiscitarian brand. Rousseau's notion of the peoples will is not based upon the measurement of the views of individual citizens, but it aims at the development of citizenship by means of collective discussion and education. Educating citizens as active members of the community is the primary aim in this model which clearly originates in the Enlightenment. For Rousseau the peoples will was not a sum of individual wills but some kind of totality revealing the sovereignty of the people as a collective. This totality had to be created in public meetings and legislative assemblies. One of the latter-day interpretations was the council or Soviet type of democracy covering a large part of the Marxist tradition; here this totality was often transformed in totalitarianism.

A necessary condition of this model of democracy is the presence of informed citizens. Present-day proponents of participatory democracy, such as Carole Pateman (1970) and C.B. Macpherson (1977), want to stimulate active citizenship. The centres of political power themselves should become more accessible to citizens. They should be responsive to their questions and certainly not only pose questions to them. The individualist bias of the plebiscitarian and competitive views is firmly opposed. Plebiscites, electronic or otherwise, are feared for the isolation of the individual citizen and the possibility of central manipulation. Another threat is a separation of opinion polling and opinion formation. Polling in its own right is considered to be a poor and passive type of political participation directed by simple and prefabricated questions. A complete fragmentation of political practice is expected. Therefore collective opinion formation in discussions and educational contexts is preferred.

The logical consequence of this model of democracy is the option of ICT applications which are able to inform and activate the citizenry. Computerised information campaigns and mass public information systems have to be designed and supported in such a way that they help to narrow the gap between the 'information rich' and the 'information poor', otherwise the spontaneous development of ICT will widen it. Therefore the access and the user friendliness of the new media should be improved. According to the participatory view this is the only way to really open up or make transparent the political system to the mass of the citizenry.

Electronic discussion is taken as a second option. It is attractive as it could serve opinion formation, learning and active participation. Discussion lists on public computer networks, teleconferences and electronic town halls might be very useful. However, a first condition is that not only the social and intellectual elite will participate in them. A second one is their design as suitable instruments of discussion. Both conditions are badly fulfilled at this moment (see the last chapter of this book).

Libertarian democracy

The last model of democracy is not first coined by Held. It has appeared as a dominant model among the pioneers of the Internet community. This does not mean that the political views behind it are entirely new. Many observers have noticed the affinity of the Internet pioneers to the radical social movements of the sixties and seventies in most Western countries. These views range from classical anarchism and left-wing socialism to all kinds or brands of libertarianism. The last-called are most important among these views in the nineties. Most prominently they are backed by the editors of the Wired magazine (Kelly, 1994, Katz 1997a), the Progress and Freedom Foundation in a Magna Carta written by Dyson, Gilder, Keyworth and Toffler (1994) and the Electronic Frontier Foundation (Kapor, 1993) in the United States.

The libertarian model is close to the pluralist and plebiscitarian ones in several respects, as the chances of (virtual) community, telepolling and teleconversation are hailed. What is special to it is to it is the emphasis of autonomous politics of citizens in their own associations using the horizontal communication capabilities of ICT in general and the Internet in particular. In the most extreme view it is held that institutional politics is obsolete and can be put aside by a new political reality collectively created in networks. This is the reason why it is often called apolitical or even anti-democratic by its opponents. The basic problem to be solved according to this model is the centralism, bureaucracy and obsoleteness of institutional politics which fails to live up to expectations (the primacy of politics) and is not able to solve the most important problems of modern society. A combination of 'Internet democracy' and a free-market economy will serve as a replacement. Some call this combination a 'Californian ideology' (Barbrook & Cameron, 1996), but actually it is popular among pioneers of the Internet in the whole Western world. It is well summarised by Katz (1997b): "In *The Birth of a Digital Nation* I described a new 'postpolitical' community that blends the humanism of liberalism with the economic vitality of conservatism. I wrote that members of this group consistently reject both the interventionist dogma of the left and the intolerant ideology of the right. Instead, I argued, Digital Citizens embrace rationalism, revere civil liberties and free-market economics, and gravitate toward a moderated form of libertarianism."

To enable citizens to construct this 'New Digital Nation' some applications of ICT are vital. First, citizens have to be well-informed by advanced, free and unprejudiced information systems, particularly on the Internet. Second, they must be able to discuss this information in all kinds of teleconversation systems (news and discussion groups, chat rooms, interpersonal E-mail etc). Finally, they must get in the position to give this opinion or cast their vote in telepolls and televotes which have to be followed or at least taken serious by institutional politics as long as it has not passed away. These preferences imply that the libertarian model is both a substantial and a procedural conception of democracy and that it is much closer to direct than to representative democracy (see Table 2.1).

Concepts of communication and the future direction of virtual democracy

In the description of the six models of democracy it must have become evident that the direction of the relations of information and communication between the actors of the political system is a decisive factor in the interpretation of potential venues in politics and democracy using means of ICT. Some hope and expect that this direction will be much more horizontal than before. Others think that it will remain vertical primarily, as the representation and administration of institutional politics can not be suspended that easily

or may not be weakened in principle. Two sets of concepts in communication science are very helpful in the explanation of these potential directions: the four so-called information traffic patterns of allocation, consultation, registration and conversation (concepts first coined by Bordewijk & Van Kaam, 1983 and internationalised by McQuail, 1997) and the concepts of levels of interactivity (Rafaeli, 1988, Williams et al (1988), Van Dijk (1991-1997), Hanssen & Jankowski, 1996, Hacker, 1996). Both sets of concepts contain a dimension of power between (inter)actors. Therefore they appear to be feasible for political analysis.

The four information traffic patterns are appropriate, first of all, for a classification of the extremely diverging applications of new media in politics. Allocution is the most typical pattern in the traditional mass media and political communication practices of mass society. It is known as one-way traffic, which does not rule out an audience which is active in selection, perception and cognition. *Allocution* is the simultaneous distribution of information to an audience of local units by a centre which serves as its source and deciding agency (of the subject matter, time and speed concerned). In a traditional democracy this pattern is realised in the dominant position of the centres of government or political administration and the mass media of the press and broadcasting. In virtual democracy this pattern marks political news or advertising and government information to citizens (see Table 2.2). However, ICT produces a clear shift from allocution to consultation. *Consultation* is the selection of information by (primarily) local units at a centre which remains its source. In traditional democracy the principal ways are the reference to papers, books, magazines or other sources of print and the oral council of public relations officers and political representatives and governors. In virtual democracy lots of new media are added, first of all different kinds of public information systems.

Registration has always been one of the prime (re)sources of governments and public administrations (principally votes, opinions and basic information of inhabitants and real estate). *Registration* is the collection of information by a centre, which determines the subject matter, time and speed, among a number of local units who are the sources of information and sometimes take the initiative for this collection themselves (to realise a transaction or reservation). In traditional democracy registration is a matter of printed forms, questionnaires, voting ballots, archives and visual observation. In virtual democracy the ICT means of registration are considerably stronger. Some views of democracy put their hopes on these new technical means, first of all legalist and plebiscitary democracy, each with a completely different perspective (a strong state versus direct democracy). So such divergent applications as registration systems of the government and the public administration, computer-assisted citizen enquiries and electronic polls or referenda are all marked by this pattern of information.

The last information traffic pattern, conversation, spurs the imagination of those wishing to improve democracy even more. *Conversation* is the exchange of information by two or more local units, addressing a medium that is shared instead of a centre, determining the subject matter, time and speed of information and communication themselves. In traditional democracy conversation was a matter of political or public meetings and oral interpersonal exchanges between and among citizens, representatives and civil servants. In virtual democracy the technical conversation systems of electronic mail and billboards, teleconferences and group decision support systems add to or replace these traditional oral exchanges.

The strongest appeal, perhaps, of virtual democracy is the potential reinforcement of interactive politics between citizens, representatives, governors and civil servants. But

what does interactivity - this so often poorly conceived and misused concept of social and communication science - actually mean? The most promising elaborations of this concept in communication science identify a number of *levels of interactivity.* Rafaeli (1988) distinguishes three levels of communication:(1) two-way (non-interactive) communication, (2) reactive (or quasi-interactive) communication in which later messages refer to, or cohere with earlier ones and finally (3) fully interactive communication requiring that both sides react to each other. Williams, Rice and Rogers (1988) define interactivity as the degree to which (inter)actors have control over and are able to exchange roles in a mutual discourse. They link this definition to a degree of interactivity within systems. The lowest degree of interactivity is to be found in information retrieval systems. A higher degree is possible in the communication between people and a medium where the context can be manipulated by both sides. The highest degree of interactivity is to be experienced in face-to-face conversation.

Rafaeli and Hanssen & Jankowski (1996) emphasise that interactivity is not a medium characteristic. The concept should be freed from the classic sender-message-receiver model as well and replaced by a relational model. Mediated environments are created in the context of social and spatial environments. Modern experience is the collective sharing of information in all these environments taken together. Van Dijk (1991/1997) has made an attempt to dissect a similar broad concept of interactivity into four cumulative levels and dimensions. The first primitive level is the sheer existence or possibility of two-way communications, that is action and reaction (to reactions). This is the spatial dimension. The second level is synchronous communication: clearly interactivity is damaged by asynchronous communication with too much time between action, reaction and reaction to reaction. This is the time dimension of interactivity. The third level is the degree of control of communication by the (inter)actors involved: the possibility of role exchange (sender and receiver) at will and at every time and a more or less equal determination of the content of communication. This is the action dimension. The last and highest level of interactivity is the intelligence of contexts and shared understanding (cf. Suchmann, 1991). This is the mental dimension. Until now this level has not been attained in the use of media (face-to-interface communications), but only in face-to-face communication. The promises of artificial intelligence have not been met, at least not yet. All current so-called interactive media get stuck somewhere at the second or third level of interactivity. To serve in a fully developed social interaction they have to be combined with some form of face-to-face communication, that is the fourth level.

With these concepts of interactivity and information traffic patterns in mind we are able to judge the communication capacities of the new media and construct three possible models of heir present and future use in politics. Once again they are ideal types. Presumably, our real future will be a some kind of synthesis of these models, just like real democracy in different political cultures is a variable combination of the six models of democracy we have distinguished.

In the nineties of the twentieth century the most popular model of the future of democracy in the perspective of the information superhighway may be called the *Internet-model*. In this model one expects political communication to become horizontal to an ever larger degree. The patterns of information and communication on the predominantly public, open, uncontrolled and cheap Internet in the first part of the nineties are viewed as the ones to be developed further. This network of networks is supposed to have no centre but only a countless number of intermediaries in sites and relatively neutral search engines and navigating systems. The patterns of conversation and consultation are the most

important ones in this model offering citizens the opportunity to discuss all kinds of social and political affairs (by electronic mail, news- and discussion groups or chat boxes) and retrieve all the public information needed on the innumerable information sites and systems. A high level of interactivity, reaching at least level three (of control, see above) in conversations is deemed to be possible. See the third model in Figure 2. Below.

The Internet-model is very attractive to people who support the spread of politics into society or who would even like to construct a complete alternative to present day institutional politics. Therefore it is the most popular one among the proponents of libertarian democracy, first of all. The supporters of a pluralist and participatory society might hope for the future strength of the Internet-model as well, although both accept a strong effort of the state and institutional politics, the first as the protective framework for their favourite field of action, civil society, and the second to protect and stimulate the part of the population that is excluded from participation on the Internet.

Two other potential models are discussed less often in the perspectives of the future of virtual democracy. Nevertheless they might take a much larger part of the design and the practice of politics on the information superhighway to come than the supporters of the Internet-model hope and expect. In the second part of the nineties three clear trends are developing on the Internet: growing commercial supplies and practices, a need for order, structure, transparency and moderation among users overwhelmed by information overload and unreliable information and, finally, strong attempts of governments and corporations to get a grip upon the so-called anarchy of the Internet. Anyway, the Internet is on its way to become a 'normal' (mass) medium, with the only difference that it allows a higher level of interactivity than traditional mass media (van Dijk 1997). But to what extent can or will this level be attained in the future?
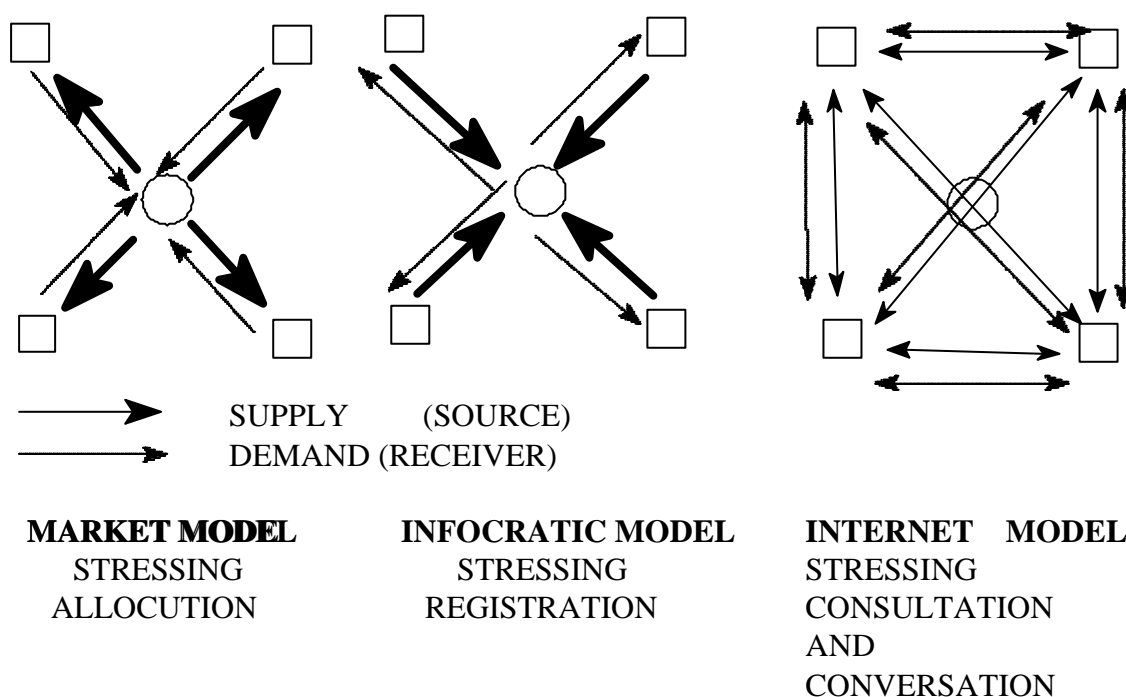

SUPPLY   (SOURCE)
DEMAND (RECEIVER)

MARKET MODEL   **INFOCRATIC MODEL**   **INTERNET   MODEL**
STRESSING   STRESSING   STRESSING
ALLOCUTION   REGISTRATION   CONSULTATION
                                                                              AND
                                                                              CONVERSATION

Figure 2. Three models of the information superhighway

In the second model of the future information superhighway, a *marketing model,* we get the predominant commercial supply of interactive television, pay-per-view and advertisements on this highway as a broadband successor to the jamming Internet. This model corresponds much better to the present workings of the mass media in broadcasting, the press or telecommunications and the current practices of institutional politics. In this model only a weak feedback channel is added to the allocution of the traditional mass media, first of all broadcasting. - See Figure 2. , to the left.- Here, the source and initiative of the overwhelming part of information produced remains with the (big) suppliers. Controlled feedback channels serve as a marketing tool for them, measuring and targeting selected audiences of consumers and citizens. On the economic market it would mean that so-called interactive services of information, entertainment and transaction take the larger part of traffic on the information superhighway. This is exactly what the large media corporations are trying to achieve at the end of the nineties offering pay-TV, information services, advertisements, electronic commerce and games on the Internet and other networks. On the political market this model would mean the predominance of information campaigns of the government, the public administration and, first of all, every kind of corporate and civil pressure groups. In times of election, actually almost continually, high-tech political campaigning or advertising would still shape the face of politics by means of a highly selective political marketing of the electorate.

The marketing model might be reinforced by a third one, which is strong as an ideal type of its own: an *infocratic model.* Selectivity tied to registration both belong to the strongest capacities of ICT. In public administrations, semi-public organisations, large corporations and political organisations powerful infocracies are growing as successors to traditional bureaucracies. Sometimes they compete with each other, sometimes they work together in exchanging information about citizens, consumers, employees and other relations. Together they might shape a surveillance society, not just a surveillance state (Loudon, 1986, Lyon, 1994, Gandy, 1994 and Castells, 1997). The largest possible control of the organisation and the market is their ultimate aim. In terms of the concept of information traffic patterns they will simply extend the current practice of many applications of ICT transferring more information about local units to the centre of service and supply than the other way round. - See Figure 2. in the middle.- Anyway, this appears to be the case in the application of ICT by the governments and the public administrations of the advanced Western countries. In the first place ICT is used to register the population and real estate, to collect taxes en to administer social services. Far behind lie the applications designed for public information supply and to open up and make transparent closed ways of government and administration for the citizenry.

The prime attention to registration is to be observed among all kinds of actors, views and interests in the political system. It certainly is not only a matter of surveying states and corporations. It is present in the direct marketing and market research of institutional politics as well as the presumed alternative political views of plebiscitary and libertarian democracy stressing the importance of telepolling and televoting. The substantial differences of political market research or direct marketing and teledemocracy should not hide their structural similarities.

The actual future of politics and democracy on the information superhighway is likely to be a mixture of characteristics of these three ideal types which were constructed for the purpose of clarification. It is still open which will acquire the strongest impact, just like this was claimed for the models of democracy above. Specific, national political cultures reveal different combinations, for instance in Northern America and Europe.

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