



Stockholm
University

Performing the Common

Recognition in Online Participatory Processes

Karin Hansson

Licentiate thesis in Computer and Systems Sciences, 2012

PERFORMING THE COMMON
RECOGNITION IN ONLINE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

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Printed in Sweden by US-AB, Stockholm 2012
Distributor: Department of Computer and Systems Sciences,
Stockholm University

To Patrik, Tove, Noa and Alva

Abstract

How can e-participation be understood? New information communication technologies (ICT) create new types of public spheres, while old social hierarchies prevail. Grounds for discrimination e.g. gender, age, and ethnicity, are just as common online as in other social contexts. Moreover, socio-economic inequalities are emphasized rather than reduced. Therefore it is important to carefully investigate the participatory processes at stake when creating ICT systems aimed at supporting democracy. How can political participatory processes online be understood without relying on a simplistic view of communication technology and political participation? How can we create more open-ended models to understand e-participation in the dynamic, fluid and highly mediated situations of contemporary society? In this thesis, these questions are explored through an iterative process in two studies described in three papers.

The first study discusses how participation in a global community can be understood by translating its organizational principles into a digital system of cooperation. The initial investigation demonstrated how important identity is for technology-using behavior. It also discussed the importance of socio-economic factors for participation in online public spheres. By studying how an interest-based common is established and translating this into design principles for collaborative software, we create a model of how the common can be constituted online.

The thesis also discusses what motivates participation in locally situated commons, i.e. how one can understand the connection between the individuals' globally scattered communities of interest and their participation in the local culture. The second study emanates from an art exhibition in the public space, and is used as a platform to explore the conditions for e-participation in a neighborhood of Stockholm.

Selected papers for this thesis

- I. Hansson, K. (2012). Performing the artist in digital media: A study of art students' use of communication technology. Submitted to *Poetics* (24 p.). Elsevier.
- II. Hansson, K. (2012). Reflexive technology for collaborative environments. *International Journal of Public Information Systems*, 1, 11-28.
- III. Hansson, K., Ekenberg, L., Fürst, J. G., & Liljenberg, T. (2011). Performing structure: Fine art as a prototype for participation. *ISEA2011 Istanbul* (10 p.). Istanbul.

Other published papers within the thesis work

Hansson, K. (2010). Mediating authenticity: Performing the artist in digital media. *Great Expectations: Arts and the Future, The European Sociological Association's Research Network on the Sociology of the Arts (RN02) Mid-term Conference* (23 p.). Guildford: University of Surrey.

Hansson, K., Ekenberg, L., Danielsson, M., Fürst, J. G., Larsson, A., & Liljenberg, T. (2011). Prototyping for participatory democracy: Fine arts as means for the study of multi-modal communication in public decision making. *The Interactive Media Arts Conference IMAC 2011 – The Unheard Avantgarde* (5 p.). Copenhagen: Re-New Digital Arts Forum.

Hansson, K., Karlström, P., Larsson, A., & Verhagen, H. (2011). Actory: A tool for visualizing reputation as a means to formalize informal social behavior. *The Second International Conference on Reputation: "Society, Economy, Trust" (ICORE 2011)* (16 p.). Montpellier.

Hansson, K., Verhagen, H., Karlström, P., & Larsson, A. (2011). Formalizing informal social behavior - Developing a visual tool to support collaborative discussions. *The Seventh International Conference on Collaborative Computing* (8 p.). Orlando.

Hansson, K. (2011). The design process as a way to increase participation in a research project about the art world. *Situating ubiquity. media art, technology, and cultural theory* (18 p.). Stockholm.

Hansson, K., Verhagen, H., Karlström, P., & Larsson, A. (2012). Reputation and online communication: Visualizing reputational power to promote collaborative discussions. To be presented at *HICSS-46 - Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. (11 p.). Grand Wailea.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the participants in the research circle and the exhibition, my co-writers Johanna Gustafsson Fürst, Thomas Liljenberg, Harko Verhagen, Aron Larsson and Petter Karlström for their help in the development of the projects, Ernest Rwandalla for conducting the programming, and Måns Wrangé and Ylva Gislén for their valuable comments. I am especially grateful for the personal encouragement and academic insights of Love Ekenberg.

This research is partly funded by the Swedish research council Formas, under grant no. 2011-3313-20412-312011-3313-20412-31.

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1 Representation and recognition online

1.1 Introduction

How can participatory processes online be understood and strengthened? The communication landscape that connects the globe creates new types of public spheres, but old social hierarchies prevail. Gender research concerning social media shows how chat rooms, discussion forums, Wikis etc. are far from neutral places where participants are treated equally, but instead are places where gender, age and ethnicity as grounds for discrimination are just as common as in other social contexts (Herring, 2008; Nakamura, 2001, 2008; Wright, 2005). Research on the so-called digital divide shows that technology enhances socio-economic inequalities rather than reduces them (Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Norris, 2001). Despite this there is a kind of consensus that participation is a good thing in itself, and there is usually no problematization of the underlying liberal democratic ideology in most of the development of web technologies to strengthen e-democracy (see Dahlberg, 2007; Hands, 2005; Macintosh, Coleman & Schneeberger, 2009; Witschge, 2002). The risk of over-reliance on people's equal opportunities to participate in the digital community is that this increases rather than reduces the disparities between different groups and people. Communication technology is already giving strong groups more efficient means to globally influence the political agenda (Castells, 2007; Schradie, 2011). And despite increased globalization, the concepts of democracy and citizenship in general use are mapped on the Western nation-state (Fraser, 2005; Sassen, 1996). Therefore it is important to look carefully at the participatory processes at stake when creating the systems that will support e-democracy in a specific situation.

In this context several issues appear. How can political participatory processes online be understood without relying on a simplistic view of communication technology and political participation? How can we create more open-ended models to understand e-participation in the dynamic, fluid and highly mediated situations of contemporary society? In this thesis, these questions are explored through an iterative process in two studies described in three papers. The first study concerns how participation in a global community of interest can be understood by translating its principles of organization into a digital system of cooperation. The second study emanates from an art exhibition in the public space, used as a platform to explore the conditions for e-participation in a local geographically-constrained situation. By combining these perspectives on participation, one from the perspective

of the individual interest, the other from the perspective of the physically-situated common, a more multidimensional image of participation can be created. Common to these studies is the use of art as a method to increase participation in the design and research process. The view of practical work as a key source of knowledge is significant.

The selected papers in the thesis move across multiple overlapping fields such as visual arts, art sociology, digital anthropology and e-democracy, but here I focus primarily on the field of e-participation. In Chapter 1, I describe the field of e-participation, the research motivation and theories about democracy in relation to e-participation. In Chapter 2 the methods used are placed in a wider methodological context. Chapter 3 summarizes the articles. Finally the results are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides a conclusion and brief description of future work.

1.2 From e-democracy to e-participation

E-democracy refers to the use of information and communication technologies in democratic decision-making. As such it is a field that deals directly with the social engineering of society, and is also used as a political tool that signifies modernity and transparency. Therefore it is both interesting and important to problematize the ideological basis of the field.

1.2.1 E-democracy

A survey of the literature on e-democracy at large shows that it primarily concerns the area of government decision-making systems and the state's relationship to its residents (See e.g. Insua, 2010; Macintosh, 2004). Thus it is used in ways that strengthen the decision-making mechanisms of representative democracy.

Looking at the developments in the field of e-democracy, we find that the research field has a governmental perspective rather than a participant perspective (See e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2004; Insua, 2010; Macintosh et al, 2009). In the reviews of the field of e-participation by Macintosh et al. (2009) and Sæbø, Rose & Skiftenesflak (2008), and in Dahlberg's (2011) overview of discourses on e-democracy, the authors point to a lack of nuanced discussion of the underlying concepts of democracy, and to the fact that it is usually an unarticulated liberal or deliberative conception of democracy which forms the basis for technology development.

There is a risk that the emancipatory possibilities may be lost because of a simplistic idea of the public sphere in combination with an over-reliance on technology's capabilities. It is therefore important that we have a better understanding of the implications of the underlying ideologies in the

concepts, stories and vocabulary used when developing technologies for democracy; what I call democracy discourses. These discourses on democracy do matter when they are expressed as technical systems. Communication technology does not automatically provide the prerequisites for an increased deliberative conversation. In order to avoid widening the gap between different groups due to technology it is important to think through the democratic norms and ideologies in use and to consider the consequences they might have on the difference-making processes at stake.

The field of e-democracy does not lack definitions of democracy. However, Päivärinta (2006), for example, reviews various theoretical models of e-democracy and shows that the definitions and meanings are not always identical. Dahlberg (2011) suggests a model that could show what ideas about democracy are present in e-democracy development by creating four positions for digital democracy: liberal-individualist, deliberative, counter-publics, and autonomist-Marxist. The idea behind this model is to highlight where the development of e-democracy is and what the underlying ideologies are that dominate this development. Dahlberg argues that most of the development of e-democracy is in what he calls a *liberal-consumer* position, which is about giving citizens better service, increased accessibility and information transparency, simply to improve government “customer service” through flexible information systems and more informed decision-making. To some extent this development is also about changing the representative system by making room for *deliberative* discussion on various issues, and developing public opinion. There is less public investment in the development of technologies for e-democracy on a global scale. But it is perhaps here that the major development of e-democracy has occurred. Communication technology has enhanced participation in global movements and global communities of interest. The *counter-public* position is about grassroots activism, network-based organizations built on a shared interest that uses the Internet to create opinion and to engage members. Internet and mobile communication represent a cost-effective way of organizing the group and articulating opinions, and can also provide links to other similar interest communities globally. Democratization can also take place at a micro level, as an *autonomous-Marxist* position, within companies and between individuals in a network-based form of production that is facilitated by the rapid exchange of information communication that technologies allow: here ICT supports networked collaborations and peer-to-peer distributing and sharing.

These four positions are also useful as they are easy to combine with different perspectives on space and community as shown in Fig. 1. E-democracy can be seen in a macro-perspective, looking at society as a whole as a framework that can be reformed by local national authorities in supporting a more deliberative process (macro/local). E-democracy in a macro-perspective can also, for

example, be about giving global NGOs more power (macro/global). E-democracy can also be seen from a micro perspective, with a focus on individual or small-group interaction in specific situations. In a micro-perspective e-democracy can be seen as the local citizen's rights in relation to the local community or nation-state (micro/local), or a way to act in relation to other global citizens (micro/global).

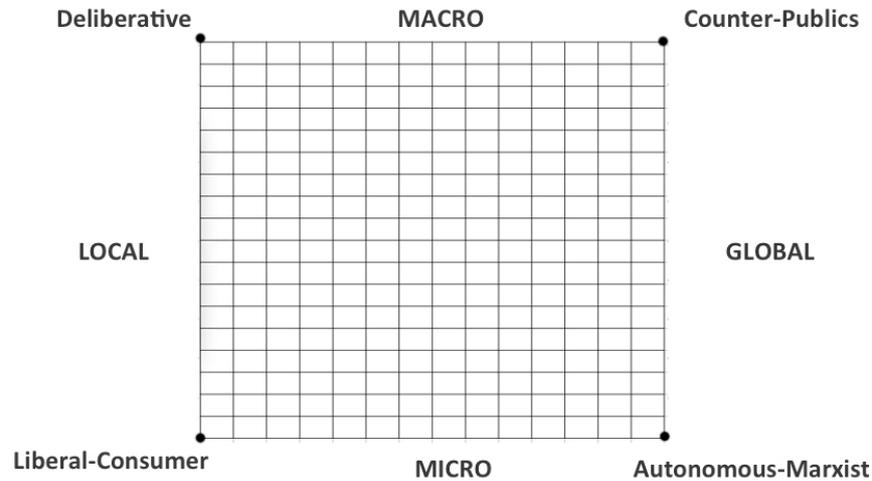


Figure 1. Map of Dahlberg’s (2011) four e-democratic positions in relation to local/global positions and macro/micro perspectives.

1.2.2 E-participation

E-participation is an aspect of e-democracy that not only refers to citizen participation in government. It also has a wider meaning as equal participation in decision-making at large through the use of information and communication technologies to broaden and deepen political participation. An overview of e-participation projects in OECD countries (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2004), and a review of EU projects for e-participation (Charalabidis, Koussouris & Kipenis, 2009), found that such projects seem to be primarily concerned with citizen relationships with the state and the interaction between them, and to a lesser extent with relationships between citizens.

In a review of the research area of e-participation, Macintosh et al. (2009) found that it moves across multiple fields such as: democratic theory, political science, communication studies, technology studies and information science. Curiously however, the authors do not consider economics and gender studies in this list. Economy and identity cannot be neglected for the opportunities to participate in political life. With this addition, Table 1

summarizes the different interacting fields through which research on e-participation moves.

Table 1. Intersecting fields for the study of e-participation.

Democratic theory	Concerned with normative arguments for political participation
Political science	Studies participation empirically
Communication studies	Relate to channels and patterns of mediation
Technology studies	The design and operation of e-tools
Information science	How data and knowledge are socially produced and distributed
Economics	Analyzes the distribution of resources
Gender studies	Analyzes the performance of identity

E-participation concerns both the negotiation of what is political, the mediation of political discourses, access to and development of technology for political participation, the production and distribution of information and resources, financial circumstances and capacities, as well as the recognition of one's identity for participation in social, cultural and political life. The question remains, however, as to what precisely political participation should be regarded. What is political participation not? There is a risk that a too narrow definition of what is political will exclude issues that is not recognized as political in the dominating discourse. If we instead broaden politics to include all aspects of group processes, politics can be about everything from negotiation in the family to discussions in the boardrooms of the private business sector.

Therefore I have initially chosen to describe e-participation in general, without defining whether or not this is political or what determines participation, but with the intention of bringing this inclusive approach in dialogue with questions of what constitutes democracy, equality and adequate political representation. With democratic participation, I mean a model for an equal participation, where those affected by the decisions are participating equally in the decision-making. Obviously equality is not something that can be assumed per se, there is nothing such as an obvious equality in a situation; instead equality is something highly relative and imprecise.

Consequently this thesis mainly concerns basic political participation at the grassroots level and how this can be supported by digital systems, as it is an underdeveloped area and well worth exploring. In a broad sense, this is about creating one's own public sphere through technology, i.e. being able to bring one's identity and world view to an influential audience, thus allowing a discussion of issues that are important to oneself as part of the political agenda. More precisely, this means technical support for democratic culture at the micro level, rather than the relationship between government and citizens. Without the possibility of setting the agenda, and thus deciding what should be defined as politics, participation in the decision-making process is not complete.

1.2.3 Representation in participatory culture online

In the popular view of information communication technology, increased participation and empowerment by facilitating ICT is emphasized. Information sharing at the micro level has also been highlighted as a more creative form of production (see e.g. Kelty, 2008; Castells, 2004). Lankshear, Knobel, Bigum & Peters (2007, p. 19) talk about a new kind of literacy, "a new kind of mindset", which means the capacity to not only interpret subtle cultural nuances in the large amounts of information, but also to participate actively in the collective cultural production that the new communication technologies make possible. Young people's cultural production is especially highlighted as an example of the potential of ICT. For example, Pachler, Bachmair & Cook (2010) see the informal learning that takes place on the Internet as the future form of school, where classroom hierarchies are broken down in favor of learning based on a students' own life worlds and ability to achieve competence in the new participatory culture. But research on the digital divide indicates that technology often increases socio-economic inequalities rather than reduces them. It seems that these differences are not primarily about access to technology, but about how to use technology to reach out to influential groups (Norris, 2001; Schradie, 2011). Here there is a huge gap between people who are using the net for consumption and those who are producing online content and networking for political reasons. This difference is particularly apparent when comparing young people's use of technology, as two reports from The MacArthur Foundation show (Ito & Horst, 2008; Ito et al., 2009). Jenkins et al. (2006) describe "The Participation Gap" as unequal access to the skills, experience and knowledge required to participate in the participatory culture.

Macintosh et al. (2009) note that the unequal distribution of access to the Internet may cause severe problems with regard to strengthening democracy through increased e-participation. In a review of research gaps in the field of e-participation, Sæbø et al. (2008) call for greater in-depth knowledge of the

citizen as an e-participant, especially given the differences in gender, nationality, social grouping, and cultural background. Therefore, a question this thesis is addressing is how representation on a global micro-level in participatory culture online takes place. More particularly, how is it that some players are more likely to develop a participatory approach, and better exploit the creative possibilities of online media? And, what processes interact to create differences in the literacy needed?

1.2.4 Democracy outside the frame of the nation-state

The e-participation field mainly defines e-participation as something that is occurring in relation to the state, but broad political participation in global interest groups is also significant. However, according to Fraser (2005) and Cunningham (2002) most political theories are built on an idea of the state as the defining entity in which democracy is made. Within its geographical domain, citizens should have equal rights to participate in the design of this state. In contrast to the idea of a nation, it is common to an interest group to be defined in other ways. Here the creation of common identity is not primarily defined by geography or language, but built up around an interest, such as “star wars” or “global warming”. These interests can be explicitly political or that have more to do with the sharing of cultural values. The hegemonic liberal model of democracy is also based on a norm of equality, which implies difficulties when dealing with situations where not everyone has equal value, as in an online discussion where people have different abilities to put their opinion forward. Macintosh et al.’s (2009) overview of the e-participation research field also shows a lack of methodology for measuring the quality of online discussion. Most discussions on the web are driven by a relatively small number of active participants, and it is not just anyone who can exploit the opportunities technology offers, to resist, create opinions, or be part of creative networks. The result of Schradie’s (2011) study of US citizens’ Internet usage points to a class-based gap among producers of online content. Not only is class important for the access to digital media, but there is also a difference with regard to how the technology is used. In addition to research regarding differences in online participation between various groups in societies due to socio-cultural reasons, gender research highlights differences between individuals within groups, and how various parameters affect difference-making in e-participation. Herring’s (2008) review of research on gender-building online shows how gender is relevant even in anonymous text-based chat and discussion forums. Nakamura (2001, 2008) and Wright (2005) show how racial identity is important for participation in interactive online environments. Even in groups of peers there are differences, and everyone

has different opportunities to participate and a more or less informed understanding of the situation.

E-participation can thus be seen as something undemocratic as it reinforces inequality. Therefore a research question in this thesis is how a democratic process can be constituted on a global macro level within an online participatory culture?

1.2.5 Exploring participatory processes from a local perspective

In the field of e-participation most of the interaction is text based. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2010) provides an overview of the level of e-government worldwide which shows that e-participation technologies are restricted to the use of polls, e-mail, chats and text-based discussion forums, but that the use of social media to interact with citizens is growing. An overview of how local authorities in Great Britain are using technologies for e-participation shows that text-based web surveys and discussion forums are most used, often as a complement in addition to analogue communication forms like open hearings and focus groups (Kearns, Bend & Stern, 2002). There is currently little to offer besides web-based platforms based upon a conventional usage of images and text. Attempts such as Gov2DemOSS (Karamagioli & Koulolias, 2008) are typical, where the traditional procedure for governance is extended to include a wider public than analogue techniques make possible. Here the ambition is to make it easier for people to suggest and discuss petitions using a text-based web interface. Although such technology, in principle, *allows* for interaction, this is to a large extent restricted to traditional ways of using computer-based text and images. These tools are also often limited to instrumental attitudes towards democracy as a mean of transferring information between citizen/client and governmental institutions, rather than looking at the citizen as an active and creative participant in a continuous process of democratic governance. Therefore it seems to be fruitful to develop techniques and tools enabling the enrichment of the forms and content of the communication between decision-makers, various stakeholders, and the general public.

Looking at how more artistic forms of expression are used to increase participation in other fields there are numerous examples of how alternative forms of expression may involve participants. In participatory research, this may be, for example, by using images (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Singhal, Harter, Chitnis & Sharma, 2007), or drama (Brandt, 2006; Weiss, Wurhofer, Bernhaupt, Beck & Tscheligi, 2008). Artistic forms of expression are not just about communicating information, but are as much a way of creating new insights through the interpretation of data (Manovich, 2011). In the design field in particular, various alternative participatory methods are used to get a more informed design, grounded in the reality of potential users; ethnographic techniques as well as more exploratory methods like sketches

and prototypes (see Buchenau & Suri, 2000; Goldschmidt, 1991; Houde & Hill, 1997; Lim, Stolterman & Tenenberg, 2008). Different artistic techniques can also be employed to involve users in the design process, such as probes, scenarios and role-playing. In the Presence project, artists and designers worked with participatory methods inspired by the Situationists, to examine and gain inspiration from the context together with informants (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti, 1999). Performance as a way to develop designs in collaboration with the user also employs a range of artistic genres: improvisation theatre (Gerber, 2009), dramatized scenarios (Iacucci et al., 2002), forum theatre and role-playing (Simsarian, 2003), participatory film and performance art (Iacucci & Kuutti, 2002).

Obviously more artistic approaches might be used to develop the field of e-participation. In order to further develop tools for e-participation, a question in this thesis is how art can be used to explore a situation in order to understand the participatory practices from a situated, local perspective.

1.3 Research questions

How can online participatory processes be understood and strengthened?

- How is representation created online in a global culture?
- How can democracy be constituted within a global community?
- How can art be used to explore participatory practices in a situation?

The issue of representation is central when looking at democracy on a global level, where citizenship is not determined by geographical boundaries. Here differences due to socioeconomic factors are important when looking at who is represented in the digitally extended public sphere. In order to understand how e-participation can be developed despite processes of digital differentiation, these processes have to be explored further. This is addressed in Paper 1, where the question is how online representation is created in a global culture. Here I ask how fundamental difference-making and identity-formation processes take shape in relation to digital media. While conducting an ethnographic study of art students, I discuss how important identity is in how technology is used, and the importance of hierarchies in the establishment of interest communities.

If the basis for democracy is communities of interest rather than the nation state then what constitutes the basis for democracy? How are the participants chosen in a global community, and how does this relate to the concept of democracy? In order to develop technologies for e-participation on a global level, one has to understand what constitutes the basis for democracy beyond the context of the nation state. The results of the survey in Paper 1 were further expanded upon in the investigation presented in Paper 2. A methodological ambition here was to create a situation where

practical and theoretical knowledge could meet. What is being investigated by practical design-based research is how a democratic process within a global community can be constituted.

As we have emphasized above, most technologies for e-participation are restricted to conventional forms of using text and images online, and an instrumental attitude to democracy as a mean of transferring information from citizen/client to governmental institutions. In order to further develop tools for e-participation, it therefore seems meaningful to investigate more artistic methods for exploring new forms of communication between decision-makers, various stakeholders, and the general public. Some tentative results are presented in Paper 3, which describes the methodology of a work in progress where fine art is explored as a participatory practice in a project about e-participation in urban planning processes. Unlike the first study that investigates the issue of participation from the perspective of the individual and the interest group, this article takes as its perspective the situation in a geographically-defined location, where an art exhibition in the public space is employed as a way to better understand the conditions for participation in a situated context. In this work-in-progress, the artists are working in relation to a research project about e-democracy, using art as a method for exploring the situation. A central research question here is how art can be used to explore participatory processes from a locally-situated perspective.

Before I discuss these issues further, it is appropriate to look more into the concepts of online participation and democracy.

1.4 Theories about online participation and democracy

In what follows I describe different views of democracy in relation to the online public sphere, and suggest how to look at e-democracy in a global micro-perspective. Finally, I discuss what motivates a global community of interest.

1.4.1 Deliberative, radical or discursive democracy online

Democracy is a controversial concept under constant development. In producing its annual Democracy Index, the Economist Intelligence Unit utilizes the following parameters: electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture (Kekic, 2007). Here, freedom of speech and the ability to vote in democratic elections are basic, but a general opportunity to vote in free elections is not sufficient in itself. Just as important as everyone's voice being represented in a parliament is that different perspectives are represented in public discussions; in newspapers, on squares and in online digital media.

“Participation is also a necessary component, as apathy and abstention are inimical to democracy. Even measures that focus predominantly on the processes of representative, liberal democracy include (although inadequately or insufficiently) some aspects of participation. In a democracy, government is only one element in a social fabric of many and varied institutions, political organisations and associations. Citizens cannot be required to take part in the political process, and they are free to express their dissatisfaction by not participating. However, a healthy democracy requires the active, freely chosen participation of citizens in public life. Democracies flourish when citizens are willing to take part in public debate, elect representatives and join political parties. Without this broad, sustaining participation, democracy begins to wither and become the preserve of small, select groups.” (Kekic, 2007, p. 2)

The ideal democracy described in this quote is a *deliberative democracy*, where political issues are discussed and developed by free individuals in a free public sphere before being voted on. Here, conflicting interests are solved through consensus-building discussions, where participants reason their way to solutions on rational grounds. Habermas (1990) argues that the free public sphere is crucial for democracy, it is in this consensus-building forum that questions are developed and solutions found. Therefore political issues and solutions to problems must be discussed in a broad public discussion in order to be legitimized.

But according to Albrecht’s (2006) study of political participation in relation to the digital divide, political participation, both online and offline, is mainly closely-linked to the individual's socio-economic resources. Norris’ (2001) research on the digital divide describes how the gap between different social groups tends to increase. Political participation online also means that those who already have great influence on policy will have even greater influence, and that the gap will grow between those whose opinions are represented in the public spheres and those who have fewer opportunities or incentives to participate. The relationships among those who do participate in discussions on the Internet are no more egalitarian than in other forums. Gender research on new media indicates that gender, race, and ethnicity as grounds for discrimination are just as prominent as in other social contexts. Nakamura (2001, 2008) and Wright (2005) claim, for example, that racial identity is important for participation in interactive online environments, and Herring (2008) and Postmes & Spears (2002) show how gender is relevant, even in anonymous text-based chat and discussion forums, and that hierarchies and status are reproduced on-line. Discussion online is thus far from the “ideal speech situation” between equals that Habermas (1990) speaks of, where consensus is reached through rational reasoning in a free public sphere. Consequently, the public sphere in which

political issues are prepared can be seen as a profoundly undemocratic and unequal place, governed by regimes quite different from the ideal democracy model. The elected representatives here are in between two different incentives; on one side are the views of the citizens expressed in public elections, on the other side strong groups who control the opinions that dominate the public sphere and that also affect public elections (see Fig. 2).

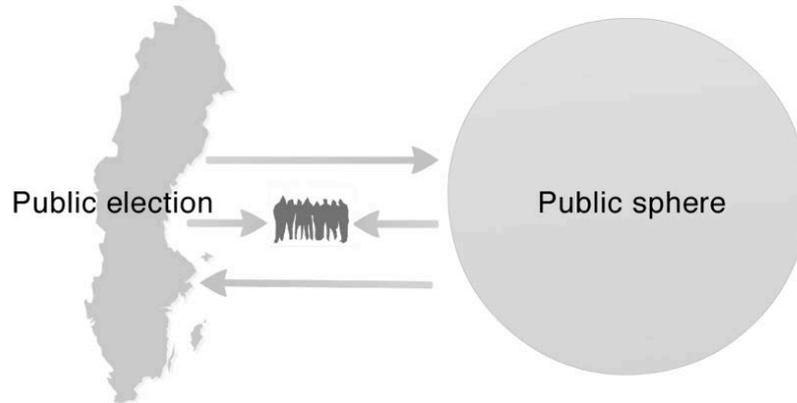


Figure 2. Representatives of residents in a State governed by the voters' opinions expressed in public elections, and the public opinion developed in the public sphere.

Representatives of a *radical democracy* question the basic conditions of deliberative democracy; Mouffe (1999) argues that the kind of enlightened reasoning, advocated by proponents of deliberative democracy only works as long as there are no major conflicts between different groups. In practice politics is full of passion, and arriving at a consensus on rational grounds is impossible in many situations. The conflicts between different interest groups and worldviews are simply too large. In addition, the agenda and discussion are governed by a hegemonic discourse. In this dominant discourse there are constraints on what positions it is possible to take.

Fraser (1985) points out how Habermas' idea of a public sphere is gendered and influenced by Western industrial capitalist norms. In this idea, the public sphere is coded as masculine and the related family and traditionally encoded female rooms are defined as private, as an area that should not be subject to public discussion or decision. In this perspective private issues in the family are not political, thus not on the agenda. In a radical democratic perspective, the power to define what is actually a political subject is central. Information technology can, in this perspective, reinforce dominant norms about what is political, and can increase the

tension between different people in society, between people whose questions count as political and people whose questions are not even discussed.

Norris' (2001) research on the digital divide in and between 179 countries, describes how the gap between different social groups tends to increase, not only between those with and those without access to technology and the training required to manage information, but also between those who use the Internet to get involved and participate in public life and those who use it more for consumption. Albrecht's (2006) more recent research discusses the importance of the interplay between intersecting factors such as socioeconomic status, political and cultural representation and hegemonic discourses. Dutta-Bergman (2005) demonstrates in a comparison of research on the digital divide and research on community satisfaction the relationship between involvement in local political life and the Internet, and that greater use of the Internet involves a division between people based on identity and common interests rather than bringing together different groups and perspectives.

This fragmentation of the public sphere into several different spheres can be seen as a problem, but the ability to create alternative public spheres, what Fraser (1990, p. 67) calls "subaltern counter-publics", can also be seen as an opportunity for marginalized groups to develop their own counter-discourses in dialogue with peers.

Communications technology also makes it possible to combine different identities. In what Dryzek (2005) calls a "discursive democracy", identity and interest are not necessarily the same. In contrast, a political practice that emphasizes the antagonism between different groups underestimates the contradictions and unequal power relations within these groups. Identity-based groups held together by common norms and culture, can be composed of individuals with different interests. Here, technology means that it is easier for individuals in different groups to gather around a specific interest, regardless of their group affiliation, and this may thus loosen the links between identity and interest.

Dryzek further argues that in order to reduce the importance of antagonism between different groups, we need public rooms far from the hot political spaces where decisions are made. Rooms without deadlocks and large interests at stake, where it is possible to maintain a discursive conversation about common problems. In the long run, this discursive development allows a change in the hegemonic discourse that determines the agenda in the rooms where political decisions are taken. Dryzek also argues that it is wrong to speak of one public sphere, but that there are many different public spheres, more or less distant from the influential place where decisions are negotiated (Fig. 3). Within these micro-public spheres more creative discussions can take place between people with similar interests, and thus

enable the development of arguments and ideas strong enough to influence a larger public sphere.

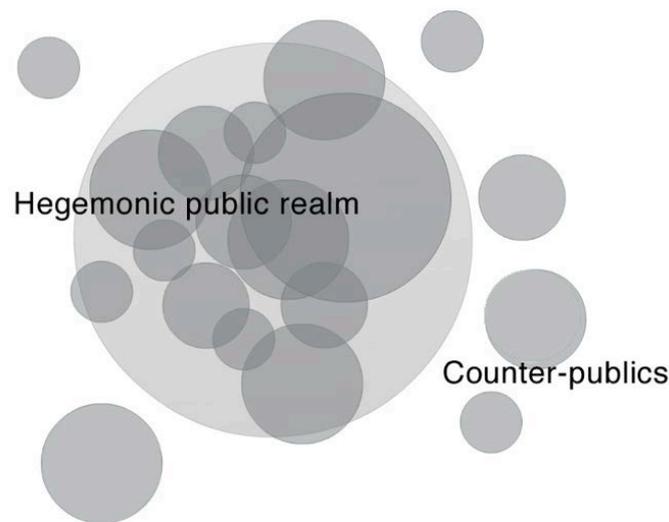


Figure 3. Illustration of how the public sphere is not one but several, and what can be discussed in the public spheres is controlled by the hegemonic discourses within which only certain questions and statements are heard. Alternative counter-publics develop their own discourses outside of the dominant one.

In summary, increased online political participation most often involves groups that are already influential. Here, the use of an unreflective concept of democracy in the design of e-democracy can further add to the differences, if one assumes that all are equal, this can enforce differentiation due to the unequal use of the communication technologies. A concept of democracy that recognizes the antagonism between different groups might better depict the actual division between different groups to which the technology contributes. But the difference-making processes take place even within the group; here technology can serve as a way for individuals to make contact with individuals in other groups who share an interest that would otherwise not be recognized. These micro-public spheres that create community around an interest can also be improved by technology, and more easily influence the development of what is possible to discuss in a hegemonic public sphere.

1.4.2 Representation: a central question for a global democracy

Interest communities can often be globally spread, as interests may involve global common issues like the environment or music. But most theories

regarding democracy have problems dealing with democracy outside of the nation state. This has, for instance, been explored in a comparative study of how different theories of democracy deal with globalization (Cunningham, 2002). Cunningham claims that there is a tendency to look at democracy as a global extension of the nation-state, rather than something temporary and non-governmental. Therefore most democracy theory lacks the ability to handle a situation that is not constrained by a clearly-defined authority.

According to Fraser (2005), the problem with theories taking the nation state as given is the issue of *representation*, to decide who actually is a citizen in a given situation. Fraser's definition of global democratic justice consists of three parts. The first, *redistribution*, is about fair distribution. Here democracy is not just about legal rights to vote or to speak freely, it is equally important to have the social, economic and cultural capital required to participate as a full citizen in political life. The second part is *recognition*, recognition of one's identity, and that the questions you feel are important are acknowledged to be political. The third part, *representation*, that those affected by decisions are also involved in them, is increasingly relevant as the nation state as the basis for the institutionalization of democracy is questioned.

Dahl's (2002) theory of democracy is interesting in this context because it does not take the nation state for granted. Instead it defines demos as *the context that includes those affected by its decisions*. Thus it can just as easily apply to members of a family or of a state, as well as participants in a globally scattered community of interest. Democracy is thus a process that is not just about making decisions, but is also about defining who is a citizen. Hemberg (2002) has connected democratic meeting techniques developed in critical pedagogy and in feminist-oriented movements with the theory of Dahl in a model that can be used in analyzing a collective process (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. The democratic cycle according to Hemberg (2002). The relationship between participants, agenda, participation, decision-making and understanding.

For me this model has been useful in different types of collective works, from educational contexts to political associations. In this practice democratic participation is not fixed in a set of methods, but is a way of maintaining the reflexive process on a daily basis. Here a model that is simple to adopt is useful in order to create a shared vocabulary and understanding in the group. By analyzing how citizenship is decided; how the agenda is set; how the discussion is moderated; how the decisions are made and the level of understanding is maintained, we can reflect on the degree of democracy in a situation. This situation may look different; it can be a working group, a country's inhabitants, or a community of interest.

Democratic meeting techniques can be seen as a development of traditional meeting techniques where one uses an agenda and there are rules for speaking and voting procedures. But instead of assuming an ideal speech situation where participants are relatively equal, these techniques assume that people do not participate on equal conditions, that they have different capacities for participation and that they are treated differently depending on interacting power structures. By varying meeting forms, by visualizing power structures, and by constantly reflecting on the meeting culture, a more democratic culture is developed (see Hedenstrand, 2008; Hemberg, 2002).

To summarize, e-democracy on a global level can be viewed as democratic techniques for dynamically generated global communities of interest. Here the question of representation is central, to define who is part of the community. Consequently, to find ways to develop participation on a global level, what we need are models of democracy beyond the nation state. In a global perspective, democracy can be seen as a cultural practice within a dynamically-created interest group, where there is a reflexive practice to promote a democratic environment.

1.4.3 Recognition and closeness motives for participation

If the motivation for community is not based on national and geographic boundaries, but is about relationships between participants in dynamically-created global communities of interest, one must understand what it is that motivates and structures this participation. According to urban network theory, participation in informal networks is structured along parameters such as class, gender or ethnicity, verifying the assumption that equals are looking for equals (Hannerz, 1996). People with similar interests or similar problems are simply attracted to each other, as they acknowledge each other's perspectives, codes, and rituals. In this perspective, community is about shared cultural values, norms and values developed in interaction between individuals over time.

The field of contemporary art can be used as an example of a global community of interest, what Hannerz (1996) defines as a global culture held together by common values. This mediated culture co-exists with other cultures in local countries, but the participants recognize each other, sharing a language that is developed and manifested by common books, newspapers or global events such as biennials where participants meet directly. Some art sociologists describe how important difference-making parameters such as gender, class and ethnicity are to structure the various parts of the field. Braden (2009) shows, for example, the importance of gender for the long-term reputation of early modern artists in the United States. In his study of the academisation of the role of the artist in the 1960s in the U.S., Singerman (1999) shows how this was connected to masculinization. DiMaggio & Ostrower's (1990) comparison between black and white participation in Euro-American and Afro-American art shows that most black/white differences in Euro-American high-culture participation reflect educational inequality; but black Americans participate at a somewhat lower rates than whites in addition to what can be expected from their educational background. Levin shows in a wide-ranging U.S. based study of the relation between high cultural status and mass popularity how culture consumption and production have been used to distinguish between classes. DiMaggio (1987) describes the relationships between social structure and patterns of artistic consumption and production, and classification of artistic genres. Bourdieu (2000) shows how the field of culture in France is structured by class and gender. In Sweden, Ericson (1988), Gustavsson et al. (2008) and Flisbäck's (2006) studies on art education show the importance of class and gender for success in establishing oneself as an artist.

Despite the fact that difference-making is an important aspect when describing the art community, this does not explain why people participate in this culture. One of the major critiques of a sociology that emphasizes the importance of dominance and structuring factors such as gender, age and class, is that it does not explain how people make a meaning of hierarchy and how they motivate their actions. If asking the actors why they do what they do, the answer is not primarily that they fight for a place on the field of art. According to art sociologist Heinich (2009), to be recognized by ones peers is one of the major driving forces in the modernist concept of art. She uses the art historian Bowness' (1989) four circles of recognition to explain why her informants are more interested in glory than money. In Bowness' study of the career structure of the avant-garde, the artists valued recognition by equals most highly. Secondly came people who were relevant economically and also socially, such as collectors and gallery owners. The third circle of recognition consisted of critics and art historians, who share similar values but not the same location or the same moment in time. Only in

fourth place comes the recognition of a wider audience, at an even greater distance in time and space.

Let us focus on the importance of recognition and closeness in time and space, as reasons for participating in a global community like the art world, and assume that it is not just artists who wish to gain recognition from their equals, but that this also applies to other people. The individual's relationship to other people in terms of recognition is then determined by the amount of common ground, where parameters such as gender and class are important but also time and physical location. Here the significance for information technology is that the importance of time and physical location is reduced, and it becomes easier to tie common bonds with peers. In practice this means that the common room is moved from one based on time and geographical proximity, to one where interests do not depend on time and physical location. For example, instead of having a conversation with people in your physical vicinity that you might not know very well, the mobile phone allows a conversation with friends at a distance with whom you might prefer to talk.

To understand the individual's motivation to participate in the shaping of the common local rooms, one must understand how interests due to shared geographical space intersect with other communities of interest. Here you can see the individual as more or less fragmented in various communities of interest that can be shared by people in the same geographical space, or with people in completely different geographical spaces. ICT enables fragmentation, but can also be used to reconnect people who share the same physical location by facilitating involvement in local affairs.

It may also be appropriate with a discussion of what defines 1) structuring factors such as class and gender, 2) a slightly looser interest group, and 3) a more tightly tied common culture. These concepts are relative to each other and can be understood as a scale, where a structuring parameter such as for example class can contribute to the formation of an interest group and a public sphere, which may also develop into a common culture. But it can also be seen from the opposite direction: shared values can be undermined by various interests that divide the group. Young (2005) refers to individuals' common denominator as *series*, as opposed to groups, as something that you belong to without necessarily being aware of it. The idea of belonging to a series instead of a group enables the thinking of individuals as passive members of a variety of interest groups with sometimes conflicting interests. A series may be race, gender, locality, language, food preferences, allergy, hair color, and so on. These properties can unite individuals who are completely unaware of each other. A series can also be a reason for deliberately forming a group, the reason that you identify a common interest. By talking about series instead of groups it is possible to speak of “women”, “black” and “lesbians” as community-

building, even though these series in themselves may contain conflicting interests in the form of other series like “class”, “age”, and “nationality”.

Figure 7 illustrates the difference between a series, a loosely tied interest group and a common culture:

- *Series*: A series of people who are unaware of each other share a common denominator. There are no channels of communication.
- *Interest Group*: A group of people who share a common interest and create a public-sphere. The individual has a communication channel to the group, be it a newspaper, a mailing list or similar forum that makes communication with the group possible.
- *Culture*: A group of people who share interests, values, goals and practices, and where people often know each other. The culture is mediated in a public sphere.

This should be viewed as a scale and the individual may be part of several different series, interest groups and cultures.



Figure 7. Illustration of: A *series* of people with a common denominator; A loosely-knitted *interest group*; A tightly-knitted networked *culture*. Black dots denote individuals, gray dots signify what they have in common, while lines indicate that they know each other. The length of the line has no significance.

To relate back to the discussion between Mouffe and Dryzek, the technology can thus create more antagonism between different interest groups, by strengthening the interest group's shared culture and particularity. But technology can also reduce the antagonism due to different cultures, as people find it easier to get in contact with people in other groups with which they share an interest, regardless of culturally conditioned identity, and this can develop a discussion of issues that are otherwise too strongly linked to the group's identity. Here the feminist movement is an example of this, where people from completely different classes and cultures can form an interest group, for example the issue of women's suffrage, thus changing the rules that structure the scope for action of the whole series of women. The environmental movement is another example. But it can also be local issues where different types of people can form groups around interests without

sharing the same cultural values, as for example as when the local citizens in Husby in Stockholm protested against development plans for the area.

To conclude this overview of various aspects of democracy and participation online, the public sphere can be understood as a variety of sometimes overlapping micro-public spheres whose community is based on interests and recognition. The individual takes part in several more or less coherent communities of interest, which can all be seen as bases for public spheres. The technology does not automatically give the conditions to an increased deliberative discussion. Difference-making processes in online discussion forums mean that the discussion is not representative of the participants involved. Some people's voices are heard more than others, a hegemonic discourse constrains the agenda, and the discussions that take place are thus not representative of the perspective of all the participants. This difference-making means everyone's opinions and identities may not be equally heard, and also creates different incentives to participate for different people. To find ways of developing a more democratic e-participation in local and global interest communities, I have applied Dahl's (1989) model of democracy. On a micro level, this model of democracy means a cultural practice within a dynamically created group. Such a community, based around an interest, can be more or less tight, from hardly being aware of the group to sharing cultural values and identity. To understand an individual's motivation to participate in the shaping of a local community, one must understand the importance of closeness as well as recognition, and one must also understand how the individual is involved in several, sometimes conflicting, communities of interest.

In what follows, I describe a methodology for further examining these issues from a qualitative epistemological position with a mix of participatory research methods.

2 Methodological approach

Methodologically the work is positioned in a qualitative epistemological position that acknowledges the importance of situating research within a particular social, cultural and historical context. This means that I stress the importance of the qualitatively-defined basis for different methods, quantitative as well as qualitative, and I see the researcher as a co-creator in the development of the social world under study.

In my perspective the interpretations, structures, theories, and other systems used by the researcher also affect the socially constructed worldview under investigation. Consequently, the researcher is responsible for the worldview that is created. Here I do not mean that the researcher must change the world, but that the researcher is always changing the world to a certain extent, and therefore a critical reflection on the ideologies that are reproduced in the research is important. I am also interested in identifying theoretical perspectives that can be useful tools, not only for understanding but also for changing the world. Therefore, I am interested in how the singular actor creates meaning, but also in understanding how the actors are co-creators of the structuring processes. Haug (1999) suggests that an actor perspective implies an emancipatory aspect, as it visualizes how the individual is a co-creator of the social world, and can therefore also stand for change. Therefore I think it is interesting to combine a macro-perspective that highlights overall social structures with a micro-perspective that illuminates the social creation of meaning that motivates the single actor. I have chosen a mix of participatory research methods that in different ways focus on this relationship, from established qualitative ethnographic methods to more unexplored participatory research methods, as well as exploratory design methods and artistic methods.

In the following I start by explaining this qualitative epistemological position and continue with a discussion of the mixed methods used in the actual research.

2.1 A qualitative epistemological position

My approach to knowledge is closely related to so-called hermeneutic phenomenology, as I focus on the importance of the researcher's worldview for the interpretation of the given phenomena.

Understanding the world hermeneutical is, according to Gadamer (1988), an ongoing process of interpreting data in relation to past experience, where the new information is interpreted from our pre-understanding but also

changes our understanding. According to this theory, it is thus prior experience, a larger context or a theory that allows the reading of the phenomenon. On the other hand, an understanding of the particular phenomenon is needed to understand the context. The creation of knowledge is thus iterative; a hermeneutic circle of understanding where the overall context creates an understanding of the individual experience that sets the context in a new light and thus changes the context. The phenomena refer to objects perceived by humans. The phenomenon of “chair” is in this view, not the “thing in itself” to borrow Kant's terminology, but how this object is defined, perceived and used by humans. According to Kant (2009), we can never attain this object “in itself”, but must still assume that it is there.

“For such an object can never be presented to us, because it cannot be given by any possible experience. Whatever perceptions you may attain to, you are still surrounded by conditions in space, or in time and you cannot discover anything unconditioned; nor can you decide whether this unconditioned is to be placed in an absolute beginning of the synthesis, or in an absolute totality of the series without beginning” (Kant, 2009, Section IV)

Phenomenology starts out from a position that there is something collectively experienced that the phenomena describe, and whether this is designed or given by nature, which if we cannot catch it we can at least circle it. This is a pragmatic approach that points to possible ways to explore the world as we experience it together.

Hermeneutical phenomenology is an orientation of phenomenology that questions the division between the phenomena and the object that points to the phenomena (Laverty, 2003). In this perspective there is no “thing in itself”, no essential reality beyond our experience of it. Instead, we are born into an already written story that is the pre-understanding we use to interpret our sensory impressions, a narrative that creates order and meaning, and that is the basis for the new stories we co-create. This does not mean that everything is relative to the individual's position, but that we interpret and understand matters based on past experience, and that new insight means that further meanings and interpretations of a phenomenon can always be added. In a research perspective, this means that previous research or theoretical constructs can be used as keys that open to new understanding. A structured analysis of a text can derive meanings that are beyond the researcher's direct understanding.

2.2 Participatory research questioning power relations

Methodologically this qualitative approach means that the researcher's position is crucial, as the empirical data is defined and interpreted by the researcher's experience. It is therefore important to reflect on the meaning of who the

researcher is. Feminist scholars especially emphasize the importance of “situated knowledges” (Haraway, 1988) and the representation of diverse people and perspectives in research.

The use of different types of participatory method in this thesis is the result of a desire to develop methods that clarify and reduce the strength of the unequal power relations in the science-making practice. This means that I try to reflect on how the researcher and a dominant epistemology influence the outcome of the research, and I focus on how the research situation always contains a power dimension that affects the questions asked and how they are interpreted. By changing the power relationship in the research situation, it becomes possible to ask other questions and receive other interpretations of the results. The aim is not primarily to create a more “democratic” research situation, but to mess around and get new perspectives. This will hopefully create a larger, more complex picture of the world than we had before.

Changing power relations may for example be about having an open discussion in a group instead of having the questions in an interview situation decided in advance by the researcher, thus limiting what the conversation will be about. This may involve taking into consideration the differences in the opportunity to speak in a group discussion, and in finding ways to change this. This is about different degrees of participation and as e-participation is the topic for the thesis, examining and developing the participatory practices in the research situation are also close at hand.

Participatory practices in art and science can be on different levels, from a minor modification of the relationship between researcher and researched in the traditional researcher-researched relationship, to situations where the researched is also the researcher.

But there is often a lack of clarity about what participation actually means in different contexts, a confusion which both depends on conflicting expectations and different ideas of what a more democratic collaboration means: That the participants may say what they think (freedom of speech), or that their opinions count (power sharing). Within the arts there is a criticism of the fact that participatory art has been reduced to an aesthetic without content, which is more excluding than including (see Bishop, 2004; Foster, 1996). Kester (2004) gives in a survey of socially-engaged art projects examples of how even action-oriented art projects that clearly aim to support weaker groups in society are likely to reproduce a hegemonic discourse that defeats the purpose of the campaign. Even in research that directly aims to strengthen the participants, as in urban planning processes or in development research, it has shown that the interests of powerful groups or individuals are promoted (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2003). Winschiers-Theophilus, Bidwell & Blake (2010), for example, suggest that the underlying liberal norm of democracy in development research can lead to a misinterpretation of the situation, when the researcher does not

understand the hierarchies that are important in the culture. Luttrell & Chalfen (2010) conclude that a lack of clarity and a constant negotiation of the collaborative relationship in the participatory research situation is typical in participatory visual research projects from different disciplines. From an ethical point of view it is therefore important to clarify the participatory situation and the role of the researcher and researched. Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) argue in an article on participatory methods in health care that participatory research should be different from ordinary research, not because of the use of special participatory methods, but because of a methodology that problematizes the issue of power in various parts of the research process.

Cornwall (2003) identifies four levels of participatory practice in research; Functional, Instrumental, Consultative, and Transformative, depending on the purpose of the participation and the views on participation. Here the view on the informant can be as an object, instrument, operator or agent (see Table 2).

Table 2: Modes of participation (Cornwall, 2003, p. 1327)

Mode of participation	Associated with ...	Why invite/involve?	Participants viewed as ...
Functional	Beneficiary participation	To enlist people in projects or processes, so as to secure compliance, minimize dissent, lend legitimacy	Objects
Instrumental	Community participation	To make projects or interventions run more efficiently, by enlisting contributions, delegating responsibilities	Instruments
Consultative	Stakeholder participation	To get in tune with public views and values, garner good ideas, defuse opposition, enhance responsiveness	Actors
Transformative	Citizen participation	To build political capabilities, critical consciousness and confidence; to enable to demand rights; to enhance accountability	Agents

This thesis contains an exploration of all these types of participation. I have gone from looking at the participants as rather passive objects to treating them as active agents. Initially, to investigate presence on the web for a student group, I began to gather information available online. Here I observed the students' expressions on the web and relations in social media. The informants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the results, but in practice did not have much to say. I went on to conduct individual interviews, where I, as a researcher, asked questions and collated and interpreted the results. The participants were treated as objects that

should confirm or question my online findings. To deepen this investigation, and to reduce the power structure of the situation where I as the researcher decided the agenda, I went ahead and explored more participatory methods such as a research circle where the informants were treated more as actors and stakeholders in the research and the group together created the agenda. Here, democratic meeting techniques were used to enable a situation where participants have a more equal distribution of time and information. The research circle developed into a participatory design project that explored additional perspectives on the situation with the ambition of changing it. Here the role of the informants was more as agents in a transformation of the situation. In a subsequent art project a memory work study was conducted with a group of artists as a method for gaining deeper understanding of a common theme. Here I regarded my informants as co-researchers and experts on what was investigated. My role as researcher in this context is more like that of a secretary and moderator of discussion and the link to a larger scientific context. The aim of the art project is to connect a certain situation with the subjective position of the participating artists, in order to develop a multifaceted image that can expand the discussion to a wider group of people. Here the participants have become artists, and the researcher a curator or director of a cultural event.

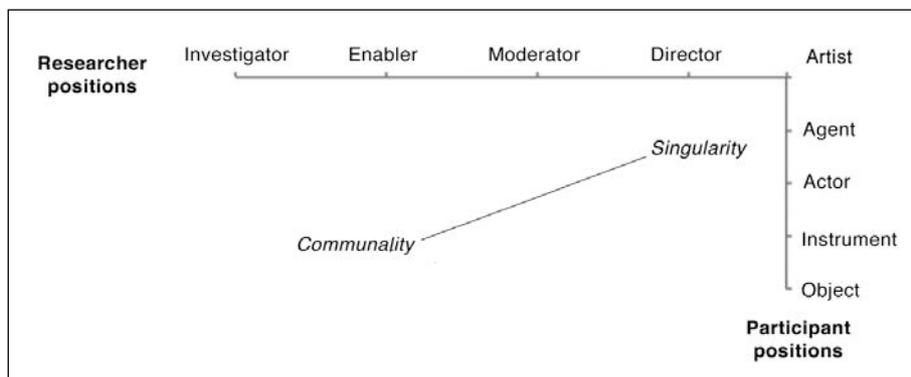


Figure 8: Positions for researchers and participants in relation to different epistemological positions.

Combining the scale of different types of participant with the scale of different types of views on the researcher, we get a field (Fig. 8) where one can place uses of participatory methods. Uses corresponding to different epistemologies, from seeing the researcher as someone who is coming up with general theories looking at informants' common behavior (communality), to ideas of particularity and subjectivity as a basis for knowledge production (singularity). Mixing participatory methods is a

matter of taking different positions on this field, and using the tension and contradictions between these positions as a source of knowledge.

In the following I describe the methods I use to access what I call “agency in structure”, i.e. to see the actor’s perspective, while also looking at the actors as carriers of structure. I also describe in greater detail how I use participatory methods that question the researcher's authority and emphasize collaboration.

2.3 Mixed methods to explore contradictions

Though in this thesis I have mostly used distinctive qualitative methods and looked for heterogeneity rather than for statistical relationships, I do set the qualitatively-oriented studies in relation to more quantitative studies. But also in my own studies I try to twist and turn the material to illuminate it in several complementary ways. It may, for instance, be a matter of collecting qualitative data using open interview responses, and then quantifying the results by, for example, counting how many people interviewed emphasize a particular subject. Or it could be about letting the statistic results of a survey form the basis of an interview question to see how the informants motivate and manage this information. This way of using a mix of approaches to illuminate a phenomenon is usually referred to as triangulation or mixed methods, and simply means that you mix quantitative and qualitative approaches.

In principle, many researchers use a mixture of methods without consciously linking these to a particular worldview, as for example letting a questionnaire consist primarily of closed questions but finishing with some more open discussion questions. In order to better develop the strength of the use of a mix of methods Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Pérez-Prado (2003) claim in an overview of the field that it is important that the researcher is clear about the ontology and epistemology that underlie the choice of methods and approaches. In their review of 56 mixed methods studies, Greene, Caracelli & Graham (1989) list a number of reasons for using mixed methods: Triangulating different methods in order to obtain a confirmation of these; To gain complementarity and clarify the results from one method with the results from another method; To use the results of one method to inform and develop the other method; To discover paradoxes and contradictions, and the recasting of questions from one method with questions or results from the other method; To seek to extend the breadth and range of inquiry by using different methods. My focus here has not been to gain complementarity and confirmation but rather to use different methods as a way to discover paradoxes and contradictions, and as a way to recast questions from one method with questions or results from the other method.

In what follows, I describe the various participatory methods I have used that, in different ways, correspond to a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

2.4 Ideal types connecting the actor to the structure

Phenomenology can be said to involve the study of collective structures created from the individual perspective (Smith, 2008). However, it may seem like an impossible task to have both a macro-perspective and an overview of the norms and cultural practices as constituted historically and collectively, while having a micro-perspective and seeing how individuals make meaning of the structure of contextually and historically constituted norms. With the concept of ideal types, Schütz (1953) wanted to bridge the tension between seeing the situation from a structural perspective and viewing it from an individual perspective. He argues that to understand the social world the researcher must not only understand oneself but also the reasons behind the behavior, the very meaning-making that takes place in different situations. The social world is the sum of the players' actions and the researcher should therefore start from the actor's perspective. But Schütz points out that the risk of a too-intrusive study of the actors' perspective is that you do not catch sight of what constitutes the social common. Since it is impossible to fully understand another human being, much less to do this on a larger scale, the social world has to be simplified and typified.

As a solution to the problem of seeing the situation from the actor's perspective while ensuring the actor as part of a structural whole, Schütz (1953) suggests the creation of ideal types. The research method can be seen as oscillating between a subjective position where the variables and categories are identified qualitatively and a position where the empirical data is systematized through the categorization and creation of ideal types. An ideal type is formed by the properties and components of the given phenomenon, but is not intended to correspond to any characteristics of any particular case. It is not intended to refer to the ideal case, or the statistical average values, but rather to emphasize certain elements common to the majority of cases of the given phenomenon.

There is a risk that the ideal type becomes a sort of stereotyping, which reflects the researcher's presumptions more than the reality being described. Therefore it is important to really base ideal types on empirical data for them to be appropriate in the context under investigation. In the initial work described in Paper 1, I analyze how 50 art students "perform" in newspaper articles, blogs, web pages and images, and I construct from this material a number of ideal types as described below. These ideal types then guided the selection of informants to 10 semi-structured interviews (40–80 minutes

long) where the students' online behavior was discussed and related to the students' other contexts.

2.5 Digital ethnography

Digital ethnography is a young field, and in particular the visual and interactive dimensions of digital media are relatively unexplored (see e.g. a discussion of this in Boellstorff, 2008, 2009; Murthy 2008). Visual methods mostly focus on a small distinct aspect of the visual, such as the documentary picture, or plotted drawing. Here I have taken a rather holistic approach to all aspects of the visual, including the mode of production. Ruby (2005) speaks of methods for capturing the informant's "cultural self", the sum of all the scenes in which you participate. What I tried to capture here is rather a "performative self", where I looked at how students behave as artists in a context that is mediated. These scenes are highly public, and the visibility and online participation is created by a repeated and consistent presence. To understand e-participation it is both necessary to see the visual discourses that express a particular identity and the actual technical means of production the individual should be proficient in to master communication. All aspects are an important part of the person's capacity to participate online. Basically it is about the person's media literacy, their ability not only to understand the media but also to understand and control the subtle cultural nuances that are important. Lankshear, et al. (2007), among others, talk about a "new literacy" as the capacity to participate actively in digital cultural production. Here communication is about the character of the image, color and typography on the web page, whether it is a free blogging service or their own web page, whether it is on Facebook or Myspace, if the image of the person is coherent or fragmented, and so on. Also the technical aspects of the information, whether it is a photo of a painting or an interactive video, are treated as expressions of the identity and thus a part of the whole. In order to investigate how anyone participates online it is not enough to look at the information available. Interactivity is required for a deeper understanding of the interactive and social dimensions of social media (see e.g. the discussion by Doostdar (2004) and Murthy (2008)). Therefore I have created active user identities in the most used social networks, like Facebook, Myspace and Flickr.

Another important aspect of digital media, in addition to technological constraints and opportunities, is to understand who the sender is. Who actually created the information is important, whether it was a private person, a representative of an institution or the user himself, and to understand the aesthetic and social conventions that both enable and constrain the communication. Studies in art sociology tend to avoid

discussing communicative practices in terms of strategy and tactics. It is therefore interesting to borrow concepts from other fields where power and distribution channels are more central issues. To analyze the material I have therefore used the concepts that Baumann (2007) borrowed from theories about social movements in order to interpret the material. Here the concept pair *ideology* and *discourse* is extended with the concept of *frame*, which links discourse to a broader context and indicates a conscious sender as opposed to more unreflective discursive practices.

By discourse, here I mean the aesthetics, the concepts, stories and vocabulary used for communication within a given area. Ideologies have a more coherent logic that provides an understanding of the world, its norms and values. Frame is about framing a specific question, condition, event or object, by linking this to an ideology. Framing is the discursive process of applying frames. It is the work that seeks to convince an audience about a specific viewpoint, and it is done by a frame that invokes the arguments or values of an ideology, through tools provided from a discourse. In this context it may for example be about the use of a particular aesthetic and vocabulary (discourse), framing the artwork or the artist in a particular approach to art (ideology). As for example in this text about an art student from a local newspaper:

“Because she is not on site it is the gallery’s manager [name], who presents [name] and her work of art. [...] He knows she wants to have her art without words, that it shouldn’t be talked to pieces but rather must be allowed to speak for itself.” (Quote from an article about an art exhibition in a local newspaper)

In the text above one *discourse* is “art without words, that it shouldn’t be talked to pieces but rather must be allowed to speak for itself”, a discourse that points to a romantic view of art where the artist is special and unique and a kind of oracle who speaks through their art, an *ideology* I call “singular”. The *frame* in this text is the context, an art exhibition and a gallery manager who confirms and legitimizes the art praxis. The text comes from an article that frames the discourse on another level, connecting it to an online local newspaper that expresses an *ideology* of journalistic objectivity by its *discursive practice* like a certain esthetic and use of language. The *framing* is thus done twice, by the gallery manager and by the newspaper.

To understand the art student’s level of participation in the mediated public sphere, i.e. their general e-participation both in terms of actual representation and symbolic recognition, it is important to understand how the information is actually produced and by whom. It is therefore interesting to look at who is framing and whether or not the student seems to have control over the information. In the data collection I asked the following questions of the material:

- What ideologies about the artist are expressed?

- What discursive practices are used: form, color, technology, place and genre?
- Who frames the art and the artist?
- Does the student have control over the information? Who is the potential target group?
- How is the information distributed? (This is also part of the discursive practice)

Table 2. How data is analyzed, categorized and summarized as ideal types

Question to data	Categories	Ideal Types
Ideology	Singular, Artisan, Networker	Invisible
Discursive practice	Painting, video, sound, conceptual, etc.	Indefinable
Framing	Own, gallery, art critics, journalist, arts institution, friends	Students
Control, target group	International, national, peers, collectors, etc.	Icons
Distribution	Magazine, blog, own domain, social network	Agents

The categories used in the analysis of the online study of the art students were not defined from the beginning but were created from the material. Table 2 illustrates how the questions of the data create the categories. The categories are then conceptualized into ideal types that stand for different types of activity and ideology.

2.6 Research circle as participatory method

As I emphasize the importance of the researcher’s position for the outcome of the research, it becomes important to understand how power relations play a part in the survey, but also how the research design affects the power structure in the relationships between the participants. Therefore it is interesting to reflect on what the parameters are that affect the relationship of the situation, and to try out different methods of changing these parameters. In this thesis I have attempted to understand online participation in two specific contexts, but also to problematize the participation in the research practice by trying out methods of research that question the researcher's authority, and allow participants to question and partly control the research.

In the first study, where I used open interview questions and gave respondents the opportunity to challenge my results, I still felt dissatisfaction with the dialogue that occurred. Participants did not have the information overview I had and could, therefore, not so easily question my conclusions. At the same time, I felt that there was a potential for another kind of exchange, where the informants could act more as co-researchers. Therefore I looked for a way to create what Lassiter (2005) calls a “collaborative ethnography”, where the context becomes a meaningful part of the researcher’s work through criticism and advice. Here a so-called research circle became the chosen method; a forum to discuss the role of the artist in a

group of respondents where different theories and experiences were introduced and discussed. The research circle comes from a Scandinavian research tradition with roots in the study group and is mostly used in pedagogy (Persson, 2009) and work-life research (Härnsten, 1994) in the Scandinavian context. It is a non-hierarchical learning process where it is the participants who control the choice of subject and literature. A research circle is a study circle that includes an expert as a participator who can act as a moderator, but it is still controlled by the participants and often concerned with bringing the participants' experiences into a theoretical context. The method is emancipatory in that the participants control it and that the aim is to raise the consciousness about one's own working situation and how it relates to a wider context. This is similar to action research, another collaborative research method that emphasizes an emancipatory side of research (see Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Somekh, 2006). Ideologically there are also similarities with the Scandinavian school of design research. Here empowerment is seen as an important part of the participatory design process (Ehn, 1993; Gregory, 2003). But unlike action and design research, the research circle is not as problem-oriented. Inevitably the research circle alters the situation for the participants in some way, and often research circles are started for a reason, but the main focus is to share experiences and to explore how one's own practice is linked to a wider context, before identifying a certain problem to focus on.

2.7 A design process to concretize theory

The research circle that initially focused on reading and seminar discussion evolved into a participatory design project. Here the aim was to translate the principles of the art world into a digital system of cooperation. Seminars suit some people better than others. A design project can be seen as an alternative way to converse, a more concrete way to explore the theories and experiences of the artist's role, making these more accessible. Here, we used various participatory design methods such as sketches (Fallman, 2003), prototypes (Houde & Hill, 1997; Lim et al., 2008), and case studies and scenarios (Iacucci & Kuutti, 2002) to concretize our collective image of the art world. Participatory design is basically about using different methods to involve all stakeholders in the design process. From the participants of the design team to partners, customers, citizens, and end-users. For some, such as the so-called Scandinavian school (Ehn, 1993; Gregory, 2003), this approach has a political dimension, in that it is about giving users empowerment and a sort of democratization of the design process. But mostly it is about making a more enlightened design, or it is a means of introducing new systems. In this work participatory

design methods were used as a way of exploring one's own culture, primarily with an emancipatory purpose. Initially the aim was not to design something but to perform an act of design. By changing from the seminar form to a more concrete goal-oriented approach, I hoped to change the balance of power in the situation. The design process allowed for a different conversation than a conventional text seminar. It translated theory into a practical system that was tested in scenarios and prototypes. This more practical approach to the theories highlighted these and became a way of understanding their limitations. Here we started from the requirements of the developer in order to finally reach a clear specification of the system. And we used these requirements to ask more specific questions of our theories (Table 4).

Table 4. Shows a summary of how the theoretical and empirical findings from the art world influence general design principles which lead to concrete system specifications that could be used in the system development.

Summary of findings	Design principles	System specifications
Anyone can join Ongoing discussion Asynchronous communication Decentralized system	A discursive forum	A Wiki-like groupware. Users have the right to edit their own posts, and to delegate this right. Linking structures the information.
Constantly ongoing decision making	Ubiquitous voting	Linking, commenting, liking/disliking, and rating. All actions in the system create a score.
Status counts Co-branding	Counting activity	The user's total score depends on own activity and the score other gives the user's activity.
Information about the important informal hierarchy lacking	Visualized status	Transparency and visualization of how score is gained clarifies user strategies, system rules, roles and rights.
	Motivating game	Hierarchy as a way of communicating the system and motivating participation.

Here, one important insight we got from our discussions is that status and hierarchy are very important in the art world, and strategic alliances with others in the system (co-branding) are one aspect of this. You have to keep up with the right people in the right places and to refer to the right people.

But how can such a system be designed? No one believed that a system where users directly give each other status points would work in practice. Status differences are about subtle almost unconscious actions, that give some people's actions more attention and positive responses than others, without feeling one is treating people differently. Therefore instead of counting status we could calculate people's actions against each other and thus get an idea of whose actions count and whose do not. In practice, as a system specification, it means that all actions in the system receive a score that gives value to those who are commented on and referred to. This score creates inequality in status and the system can therefore also give higher scores for documents coming from actors who have high status in the system. The result is thus not only a theoretical model but also a technical system that can later be used as a way to investigate the participatory practice.

2.8 Memory work for collective understanding

In Paper 3 an art project is explored as a collective research method. Here I wanted to emphasize the collective knowledge production that takes place in the development of a thematic group exhibition. The aim is to put this method in a scientific context, and investigate whether this use of art as knowledge production may be a way of creating an understanding of the prerequisites for e-democracy in a specific situation. In order to deepen and clarify this process, we initially used another collective research method, so-called memory work. Memory work means that the researcher herself, or several researchers/informants in a group, research their own memories within a selected theme. A memory work, for example, starts with a group that decides to write down memories around a certain theme that is then collectively analyzed in the group (Willig, 2001). The memory-work method was developed by a team of researchers around the sociologist Haug (1999). The method is primarily derived from two theoretical traditions within the interpretive paradigm: hermeneutics, by assuming a constructive interactive process of knowledge, and phenomenology, by emphasizing the importance of lived experience for understanding (Markula & Friend, 2005). The ambition is to reach a general understanding of a phenomenon by starting the investigation from an understanding of the individual's experiences. To achieve this, you begin by describing conscious individual memories. The collective analysis of each memory is then intended to detect the underlying conflicts and to identify the cultural norms and behaviors involved; the reason for the memory becoming a memory. The method focuses on Husserl's idea that memories are often just memories because of strong experiences of encountering different structuring norms. The memories are not interesting in themselves, but as examples of situations that contain

various kinds of structurally determined conflicts. Although the memory starts with the individual memory, it is important to emphasize that it is not this subjective memory that counts, but the intersubjective process of knowledge that the work with the memories creates in the group (Onyx & Small, 2001). An important aspect of the memory-work method is empowerment, and the work focuses on strengthening the participants by showing how their individual experiences are formed by structures that are collectively reproduced. The method is used in the art project described in Paper 3 as a way to ground a theme in the participants' experiences, and to provide a deeper collective understanding of the situation and subject.

2.9 Art as a reflexive process

To base our understanding of a situation on our own particular perspective is something that is emphasized in the visual arts. Here it is important to ask oneself how one feels about a situation and a theme, and draw on these specific concerns. Artistic methods may involve using traditional artistic materials such as color, shape, and movement. However, what is considered a work of art and what are considered artistic materials differ from one context to another. Five hundred years ago art was mainly about the craft, about being skilled at dealing with color and form. Today, it is not only the craft that is emphasized; the idea behind the work is also central. Education in fine art at a Western art college is, in my experience, both having the ability to design something and putting it in a broader theoretical context. So it is difficult to talk about any specific artistic method. Basically it is about an artistic approach, a methodology, which is expressed by using a variety of methods aimed at achieving knowledge or expressing an opinion. In science, artistic methods can be seen as one of many qualitative methods (Knowles & Cole, 2008). The artistic methodology that permeates the artistic practice is based on a view of art as a reflective process in which the artworks are both means and ends in themselves. Here the picture is a way of having a conversation with oneself and with others, a way of acquiring knowledge. The picture here may be a way to reduce what is central to a train of thought. The image can express a thought and contribute to a discussion. Research method in a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective is about seeing a phenomenon through different perspectives and finding ways to break with one's own pre-understanding. Artistic methods used to establish conversation are often about ways of accessing the norms and conventions, different ways of examining one's own presumptions and beliefs. By provoking and challenging ingrained ideas and knowledge, and by moving, for example, one principle to an area where it does not belong, things can be seen in alternative ways. Common creative approaches in the visual arts are,

for example, practices that exchange various objects, colors, or gender. It can also be about detecting what is not in an image. Similes and metaphors is another way to develop ideas and images. Different techniques, perspectives or depth of field help us to delude our own conception of how reality is made. Edward De Bono (1993) systematized this kind of method, which can also be called creative as it is about seeing things in new ways and finding other solutions to problems. By provoking and challenging ingrained ideas and knowledge, and by moving, for example, one rule or shape to an area where it does not belong, one can see things in new ways.

In Paper 2 the participants in the research group together with the design researchers create a collaborative system that, instead of being simple and easy to use, is intended to be as complicated as possible, in order to explore the complexity of the social system being studied. This means that we do not primarily strive to do something that works technically; a total dynamic system that estimates all elements in the system whenever a change is made in a small part of the system is, for example, very slow and in practice unusable. Instead, we do this in the hope that such exploration can lead to a place that gives us a different kind of perspective on the social situation under study.

2.10 Studying one's own context

Another important aspect of the artistic method is a self-reflection that is constantly asking questions like "how does this affect me" and "how do I affect this". Self-reflection is of course something that occurs in all areas. The importance of reflection is emphasized, not least, within qualitative methodology as a way for researchers to spot and highlight their own motives and possible biases (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Within a modernist marked art education, self-reflection is used as the main justification for determining what is interesting, explaining what is being done and why it is being done. In my thesis work I have explored what lies close to me as an artist, the conflicts I experience in my own identity construction in relation to other cultures.

Becker & Faulkner (2008) believe that being part of the world you want to study can be both a hindrance and an advantage. For example it may be difficult to ask colleagues things that are obvious to those who are part of the culture, and one is influenced by the field's values and therefore may have more difficulty in seeing them. But at the same time there are benefits. It is easier to be accepted and trusted, it is easier to understand what is happening and to ask questions that, in the respondents' opinion, are meaningful. I have also been worried about offending my informants with the results of the studies, perhaps too anxious to upset the people with whom I might have

professional relationships in the future. At the same time it has been an asset that I have had informants who really could talk back and question the results. That I am influenced by the field's values has been a problem I have tried to solve by inviting co-researchers from outside this field, who have been good at highlighting and challenging these values. The collaborative research method, both in terms of involving informants and co-researchers, increased the transparency of the research process and allowed it to be challenged by everyone involved. Here, methods, concepts and beliefs that are considered self-evident in the field of art have been strongly challenged by participants from other fields such as sociology and computer linguistics, and vice versa.

3 Summary of articles

This thesis revolves around the question of how online participatory processes can be understood and strengthened. To understand the processes of participation in a radical democratic perspective it is necessary to take account of people's opportunities to participate in a social, economic and cultural perspective. The importance of recognition of one's identity, not least culturally, is another important aspect of this perspective on democracy. What distinguishes democracy on a global level is that the issue of representation is central; that is who is entitled to be counted as citizens. Research shows that there is a lack of deeper understanding of the complexity of the digital differentiation and how this affects e-participation. Therefore I have looked at e-participation in a global community of interest to better understand how various factors interact to create recognition and motivate representation on the web.

Paper 1 examines how recognition and difference-making is produced in a global community of interest by studying its online participatory practices. The results of this study were the basis for Paper 2, which describes a design-based research. Here we examine how the difference-making processes can be visualized in a digital system of cooperation, as an answer to the question of how democracy can be constituted within a global community. The individual is part of a variety of interacting factors and is involved in different groups, globally as well as locally. In order to determine techniques that motivate the individual's involvement in the local democratic process, it is interesting to understand this context from the individual perspective. In Paper 3, we place the starting point for the study at a geographically-defined location rather than in a more virtual community of interest. A central research question here is how art can be used to explore the participatory practices in a situation. In this work-in-progress, artists work in relation to research regarding e-democracy using the concept of art as a method for exploring the situation.

3.1 Performing the artist in digital media: a study of art students' use of communication technology

In this article I asked questions about what representation online looks like in an interest-based community. Here, I asked how different basic difference-making and identity-shaping processes in the art world take place in practice in relation to digital media. Digital media are often cited as an opportunity for artists to reach out to a wider public and as a means to

communicate more directly with the audience. However, research contains very little information about how visual artists actually use the Internet to communicate themselves, and available studies show that the net is primarily used as a conventional platform for display rather than as a means to communicate more directly with the public.

What roles do communications on the Internet play for young visual artists? Drawing from comprehensive sources on the Internet like blogs, web pages, networking sites and digital magazines, as well as interview data from students at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, the study examined the interplay between identity positions, dominant ideologies, and discursive practices on the Internet. The study showed a picture where the competing concepts of the artist create uncertainty about how an artist should be. Even though the technology in theory gives the individual unlimited opportunities for communication, the structurally organized positions the artist can take in order to be accepted in the art world are limited. The ideology expressed about the artist is not something new; however the discursive practices have changed. The artist is still perceived as an oracle that must be explained by others, but when the art world, through globalization, has become more difficult to overview it is not enough to hang at gallery openings; a digital business card in the form of a website becomes more important. It must however still look as if someone else does the framing. Also on the self-produced websites it looks as though there is someone else who has contextualized the artwork. There are few art students who use the technology to communicate their art directly to an audience, or who use the possibilities to organize productive platforms.

The study showed, among other things, the importance of class and gender for how the technology is used, and the importance of meaning-making hierarchies in the establishment of communities of interest. Here community is created in part by defining oneself as different and unlike other people. The collective interest is about developing this particularity and getting this picture confirmed and recognized by others with similar backgrounds and experience. The main carriers of this culture are themselves from a cultural background and have, through this knowledge, an understanding of the rules of the game. Here a conventional type of artist has grown up who primarily uses technology to strengthen ties in the group. The actors benefiting most from ICT, and who through their practice show greater cultural breadth, are mainly from a higher socioeconomic group.

Here, one can see the technology as a way of linking and strengthening a community by reproducing and disseminating its values worldwide. The community is not just an issue of shared interest but a whole identity that regulates individual behavior. The technique can also be seen as a way to relax the homogeneous culture, by more easily connecting individuals to individuals in other communities and thus pointing to other possible cultural practices.

3.2 Reflexive technology for collaborative environments

This paper focused on democratic processes in the online creative culture in globally spread commons. By designing a tool that aims to visualize informal social rules in groupware online, a theory is built of how the basis for the common is constituted in autonomous self-defined micro-cultures.

We started from theories about how a particular community of interest is motivated and maintained, namely the art world, to find principles on how demos built on interest can be effectively enforced. These principles have then guided the development of a groupware, designed to strengthen democratic processes in self-organized communities of interest. The result is a Wiki-like prototype of a groupware where the participants' reputation is measured and transformed through a dynamic voting process. The participants' scores are created by their own activities but also by others' reactions: links, likes & dislikes, ratings, and comments. This creates a system where both user activity and user reputation create the user's score level. Importance is thus given not only to users' actions but to the users' informal status. Here we assume that users will give scores not only based on the actual activity but also based on the status they attribute to the actor (that, we assume, depends on the level of closeness as well as on recognition due to intersected factors like gender, class, age and ethnicity). The participant advances in the system by gathering scores and can, based on the score level, be given different possibilities to influence the rules. Hierarchy can thus be used as a means of fostering behavior and of communicating the functionality of the interface, but also for creating stability and motivating people with high scores to continue to participate. The prototype was tested on a small group of users and is now being tested in our internal team. During the autumn of 2012 it will be evaluated in conjunction with civic dialogues in a research project on urban planning processes.

The initial goal of translating the complex dynamic hierarchies that create meaning, recognition and motivate participation in the art world into a comprehensible system not surprisingly failed. The prototype may no more than indicate that not everyone is treated equally. However, a more developed version could be used as a research tool for empirically analyzing the significance of representation and recognition, transparency and motivation in in-group processes. The system will be further developed as a collaborative tool for interest-based networks. This tool can serve as a way of drawing attention to individual initiative by visualizing how reputation is created in the system by the user and in collaboration with other users. By using the score as a way of dynamically creating roles and providing rights, informal roles in the group are visualized and formalized and thus become easier to understand and influence. This visualization of how recognition and

thereby online representation are created in a community of interest can be seen as a reflexive tool for democracy. Since individuals can see their own role in dynamically-created structures, tools are also given for example for working to reduce disparities, but also to discuss who will best represent interested parties on particular issues. This can be seen as a way to dynamically constitute the basis for the common in autonomous self-defined micro-cultures outside the nation-state framework.

3.3 Performing structure: fine art as a prototype for participation

What then motivates participation in locally-based commons? How can one understand the connection between the individual's globally-scattered communities of interest and her participation in the local culture? This position-paper suggests the use of art as a qualitative method in a project on e-participation and urban planning processes. A central research question here was how art could be used to explore the participatory practices in the situation.

Many approaches to e-participation fail due to the lack of broad citizen participation and engagement in the questions that are discussed. There are various reasons for this, but obviously it makes sense to investigate alternative ways of improving public participation in the democratic decision-making process. The art project *Performing Structure* deals with the performance of democracy in a place structured by globalization through migration and information flows. In this work-in-progress, artists work in relation to research regarding e-democracy. The basic idea is that thematic art exhibitions can be used as components of qualitative research methods and also as a way of exploring design conditions. More concretely, an art exhibition in the public sphere is employed as a way of better understanding the conditions for participation in democratic processes.

The aim was to explore and develop participatory methods on artistic grounds. The paper contributed to the discussion about artistic research by showing how situation-specific art can be viewed as a qualitative method for highlighting and exploring discursive practices. Through a triangulation of different artistic perspectives, a themed and collectively generated art exhibition is intended to create a diverse and complex picture of notions, such as participation and democracy. The artistic work is an iterative process where concrete images, scenarios and situations create direct communication with the site. Following a rich tradition of participatory art, we emphasized the artists' capacity to listen, interact and to respond. Art in this perspective is not something that comes in from above or outside. Instead it should be grounded in the activities at the site. By using movements and exaggerations and looking at a situational singularity, rather than general structures, an understanding of the common spaces is created and established from the perspective of the individual.

4 Discussion of results

E-participation is about being able to create one's own public sphere through technology, i.e. being able to put one's identity and worldview on the public stage, thus allowing recognition of the issues that are important to oneself.

In Paper 1 about how young art students use digital media, I showed the complexity of the processes that motivate the use of information communication technology (ICT). Here it is not ICT that places restrictions on communicative practices, rather it is the possible culturally-created positions the individual can take to count to her interest group that limit her expressions in the public sphere. Here it is important to behave in accordance with the established norms in order to be recognized and acknowledged as part of the community. It requires great self-confidence to break the norm and use ICT in ways that do not fit the traditional role of the artist. Class, gender and cultural residence are of great importance both for the roles individuals can play, and for their ability and incentives to change these roles by the new discursive practices that technology makes possible. The study shows that individuals with roots in many different cultures or areas of interest more easily find the motivation to use technology to create their own public spheres or what can also be called new art worlds or counter-publics. According to research in Europe and the U.S. on class and cultural consumption, people with higher socioeconomic status are also cultural omnivores (see DiMaggio, 1987; Lamont & Fournier, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Van Eijck, 2001). The survey confirms this picture. The contemporary Western art world exemplifies through a sharing of cultural norms and cultural practices what Hannerz (1996) defines as a global culture, a community of interest that is maintained at distance. Here technology has a dual role: (1) as a way to keep the culture together despite the fact that the people who are carriers of the culture are also part of other local cultures, and (2) as a way to create new alternative cultures or counter-publics for groups of people with similar interests not recognized by the dominant culture.

One can see a culture, such as the art world, as a public sphere wrapped in different nation-states' public spheres, or a stateless common with its own values and practices. Unlike for citizens of a state, there are no geographical boundaries or birthplaces that determine participation. What the common consists of is in constant renegotiation in all parts of the system. The decision process is diffuse and there is a small elite that dominates for unclear reasons. Despite these uncertainties the art world is kept together and

strong ideologies and concrete objects are derived from this process, items that are archived and stored in museums and in bank vaults.

By looking at this culture from Dahl's (1989) perspective on democracy, and asking how concepts such as citizenship, agenda, discussion, decisions, and transparency fit into the context, we create an idea of how a community built on interest happens in practice. The global impact of social media and global movements on democracy is often emphasized, but the difference-making practices in these global communities are not as forcefully discussed. What is interesting here is to clarify the processes of identity formation and recognition that take place, and that are unlikely to provide equal opportunities for the participants in these communities. On the contrary, research shows how the discriminatory processes are reproduced and even enhanced online (see Herring, 2008; Kampen & Snijkers, 2003; Nakamura, 2001; Postmes & Spears, 2002; Wright, 2005). In order to investigate but also to support reflexive democratic processes in dynamic communities of interest, we therefore developed a digital collaborative tool for visualizing patterns of activity and confirmation. The idea is that this can be used in research to understand these processes, but also as a tool that can be used to make participants more aware of how they can enable or prevent difference-making. This tool is thus developed to support a discursive process around an issue. Here it is the common that is the question, a question that is constantly evolving (see Fig. 9).

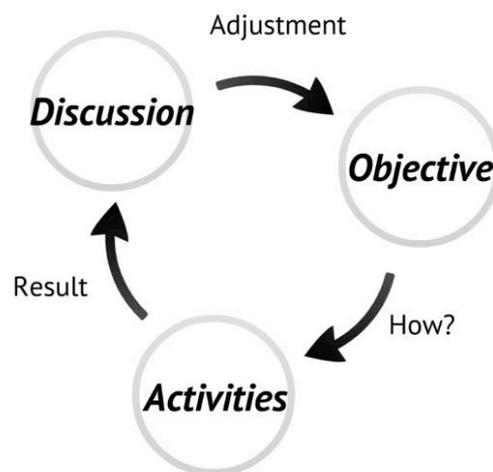


Figure 9. Recursive common where the objective is in constant redefinition.

Here representation in this common as an active participant in the discursive process is not a question of either or, but is about degrees of participation and exclusion. Just as everyone has an opinion about what art is, for

example, and in her own way participates in the community the concept of art creates, this does not mean that everyone's opinions on art are recognized as equally valid. The most recognized people in this community are those who most people think are the ones that are best at developing the target. This recognition is displayed in the tool by the individual system status produced by the continuous valuation of the individual's activity, their *reacts*, and can be said to measure the influence individuals have over the development of the joint discussion (illustrated in Fig. 10).

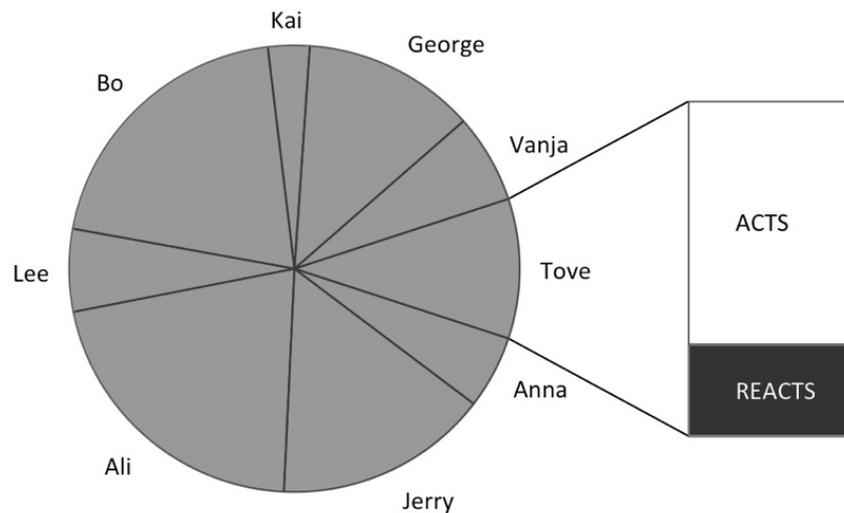


Figure 10. Illustration of how an actor's representation in the online discussion tool can consist of her own direct activities (acts) and others' reaction towards these activities (reacts)

Fraser's model of global democratic justice does not take the state and its citizens for granted as the framework for democracy, but also looks at the question of how citizenship is created. Therefore this model is useful when looking at how the level of democracy can be understood in a dynamically-established common. As mentioned in chapter 1.4.2, Fraser (2005) suggests three dimensions of global democratic justice; redistribution, recognition and representation. The tool mirrors these aspects;

1. Distribution of individuals' activities is visualized in *Acts*, showing those who are able to articulate themselves in suggestions and questions, thus also pointing to a possible redistribution.
2. Recognition is visualized in *Reacts*, that show whose questions and suggestions get support and acknowledgment.
3. Representation is visualized in *Status*, showing who is counted as the most influential and active. Our system can, by measuring

the system status, show which actors have contributed most to the community of interests, and which actors' participation is perceived as important by others. This will create, not a fair representation, but at least a clearer picture of who is counted as representative in terms of acknowledgment and recognition in the community.

The result of the design process in the form of a working prototype in Drupal can be described as a Wiki-like groupware, where the participants' reputation is measured and transformed through a dynamic voting process. The prototype will be further used to study how a visualization of these processes can be used as a reflexive technology in discussion forums, a technology that creates awareness of the connection between the individual action and the informal collective structure. It will also be used as a kind of art performance that explores the world of art through an excessive and trivializing instrumentalisation of its mechanisms.

Exploring the world of art through a collaborative research method was the initial purpose and it may be interesting to discuss how this design process can be seen as a participatory process in itself. One initial idea was that we should expand the cooperation in the small group to include a crowd of participants in an emancipatory play where, in principle, we could extend the survey to all those under investigation. But in order to attract the participation of all kinds of players we needed a digital tool that reflected the meaning-making hierarchies in the art world. Here the development of technology meant that the group of participants no longer just discussed how the art world works, but was forced to agree on exactly how it worked in every detail. Here a more practical-oriented thinking was activated that changed the hierarchies in the group from befriending those who found it easy to theorize their experience of the art world to those with experience in social media, and the ability to connect this type of system with their own cultural practices. Design work was thus making the theory more concrete, and also included the participants' expertise in the common work. Different ideas about the art world could materialize in a sort of machine, or a shared art object. The design work also created a more concrete goal to gather around that gave a deeper engagement in the project. Making the art world more concrete in simple design principles also gave an opportunity to imagine a contrast to these principles, a distortion or an exaggeration.

Johanna Gustafsson Fürst, my co-writer and one of the artists in the art project in Paper 3, claims that art for her is about realism, a way of testing ideas in real life and to find a form and a material that communicates but also develops ideas. To develop an artwork in the public realm is to explore this reality with your own body and history. When, for example, the artists Nomeda and Gediminas Urbonas suggest the burning of a car as an

expression of their research, the discussions and negotiations that is part of the process of making this happens, opens up new doors of understanding of the context and its social relations. The artwork creates a micro-public sphere from the point of view of the singular artists, that can open up for discussion, or just work as a distortion of, something that questions the situation and is open for alternative readings.

Rinkeby-Kista is a local community fragmented and at the same time held together by different globally-scattered communities of interest. These different and intersecting communities affect the individual's motivation to engage in the local common. Here it is not only people's abilities to participate that is important, if ones identity is not recognized and acknowledged in the dominant discourse the incentive to participate diminishes and thus the democratic representativeness of the local authority. By following some of the people and stories that the art project unfold for us, a more nuanced understanding of the information structures at play can be reached.

5 Conclusion and future work

This thesis has revolved around questions of how online participatory processes can be understood and motivated. Through an iterative, creative process of research the theme has been examined from different theoretical perspectives and with different empirical foci.

In Paper 1 I investigated how recognition and difference-making were produced in relation to digital media, and what kinds of identities were represented in the group of informants. The investigation of 50 art students' mediation and use of the Web showed how important identity is in how the technology is used, and the importance of class in the establishment of new communities of interest or public spheres. Here, communication technologies were primarily used as a way of reproducing a common discourse, where only certain practices and identities were possible to imagine. A smaller group used the technology to widen the concept of art and develop alternative identities, or counter-cultures, through new discursive practices.

In Paper 2, in order to extend the study of the global community of interest of how the art world can be seen, participatory research methods were used to create a situation where practical and theoretical knowledge could meet. Through practical design-based participatory research we examined how the individual's role in a community of interest could be made visible. The idea was to demonstrate how the actor contributes to the whole, and thus promotes reflexivity and creative participatory processes online. Here we started from the theories of how the art world's community of interest is maintained, and we took this as a model for a collaborative system. In this way we arrived at design principles that pointed to how the common room is created and established from the individual's perspective. This can be seen as a model of how a dynamic constitution of the representative base of democracy can take place outside the nation state framework.

Paper 3, which described the methodology of an ongoing project, further explored art as a participatory practice. Here a thematic art exhibition was developed as a way to explore the prospects for e-democracy in a local context. The project investigated how art can be used as a qualitative research method. Here we saw participation as something beyond a problem-solving method. Instead we used art as a method for inviting participants to an exploration of the situation. Following a rich tradition of participatory art, we emphasized the artist's capacity to listen, interact and respond. Through a mix of various techniques and approaches, from painting to digitally-

mediated role-play, we aimed to create a multi-faceted and contradictory picture of the situation and thus enable the development of models and multi-modal forms of communication for e-participation.

Research on globalization shows that global network-related cultures kept together by common norms and practices are enhanced by communication technology and may, for better or worse, undermine the strength of locally-based communities and rules (Castells, 2007; Sassen, 1996). This can pose a problem for nation states as the incentive to engage in the local community declines. This thesis highlights the importance of recognition and identity for e-participation. By linking the knowledge of how the base of participation is constituted in a virtual common to the situation in a geographically-situated common, and by understanding the importance of interacting spheres of influence for the individual, one might find ways to motivate e-participation in local e-democracy contexts.

5.1 Future work

5.1.1 Development of participatory planning methods

An important part of the exhibition project in Paper 3 is to use the art context to highlight and discuss the planning processes in Husby, a suburb of Stockholm, where major structural changes are planned. Here, seminars and workshops are being organized together with local organizations and stakeholders to develop guidelines for how a deepened democratization can be achieved in this situation.

Similar previous research on e-democracy has primarily concerned e-participation, process models, democratic decision-making methods, and accompanying tools and means for structured participation (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2004; Insua, 2010). Although the scientific community has resolved many issues relating to collective decision-making and the use of various methods for decision support for the public, how to engage the public on a much broader scale is still an important issue. It is especially difficult to reach groups of people who are normally alienated from democratic processes, or have limited opportunities to benefit from the information available in a standard form.

As exemplified in chapter 1.2.5 there are many examples of how more alternative artistic forms of expression may result in more people participating. Artistic forms of expression are not just about communicating information, but are as much a way of creating new insights through the interpretation of data. Here we therefore use a group of artists to help focus on the development of a place. In this context, art is one of several ways to explore forms of mediated participation, and a thematic art project can serve

as a means of prototyping for a more participatory democracy. The art project focuses on how community is established in the urban environment. Here we ask ourselves how a series of people, with the local space as the common denominator, establish themselves as interest groups and develop a common culture. Different types of art project can serve as a way of exploring a site and thus creating a greater understanding of the citizens of this area, their environment and their role as active participants in a participatory democratic system. Artists' behavior, installations, and role-play create a direct confrontation with the place and its inhabitants. The results of ethnographic studies related to the more exploratory parts of the art project will guide the development of methods and techniques for complex urban planning processes. Developed methods and techniques will be tested in other municipal planning projects in a research project on how multimodal forms of communication can develop urban planning.

5.1.2 Visualizing representation in public forums online

The idea of the collaboration tool as described in Paper 2 is to support autonomous interest groups' internal democratic processes, and to develop a kind of democratic micro-culture that highlights difference-making processes within the group and motivates extensive participation. But what happens if one takes this thinking to a physical space where the group is not as homogenous as in an online interest group? Also in local government, focus groups and public discussions are used in relation to decision-making processes. One way of creating civic dialogue is through the use of digital discussion forums where various arguments on an issue can be directly discussed with the people concerned. Macintosh et al.'s (2009) review of the e-participation area shows that the problem with this type of forum is the question of representation. It is generally people who already have a great influence in society who dominate these digital boards. A tool that keeps track of who is involved and whose positions are most influential, can be a tool to catch sight of how much value this kind of discussion can be given. This does not mean that the participants' opinions are directly recorded, but that one keeps track of some meta-data such as gender, age, education level, etc., depending on the situation, and for safety reasons separates the data from the actual discussion. This does not solve the problem that everyone's opinions are not present in the discussion or that certain discourses dominate. But at least it clarifies whose opinions are represented and whose opinions are not.

5.1.3 Enabling tools for collective action

Another development of tools for e-participation is seeing participation much more from an individual perspective, instead of from a group perspective or a government perspective. The individual is part of a wide range of interest groups and it may be interesting to see how these are to be managed and made to work together. By looking at political issues and interests as individual-driven and identity-based, rather than collectively-driven and interest-based, one can develop the system further. Here the development is not mainly about technical solutions as a matter of addressing the citizen as someone involved in potential networks of interests that can empower the individual if activated. At this juncture Young's (2005) concept of series versus group is interesting to explore. According to Young, the individual is part of many groups she is not aware of, so-called *series*. The series transforms into a group only when the individual becomes aware that she is part of this group and identifies with it in a community of interest. A typical example is passengers who each day takes a bus at the same time. Just because the passengers have a common denominator it does not follow that they see themselves as a group. If however one day the bus stops coming, the passengers may find themselves faced with a common problem they have to solve, and that might create a group feeling and collective action.

In this perspective the Internet might facilitate the creation of communities by making it easy to find others with similar problems when such occur. Social media facilitate the creation of communities around problems through tools that support communities. On Google+, for example, you can create different "circles" based on your individual networks. Facebook has groups and causes that facilitate the creation of public spheres around certain issues. By identifying the strength of the individual's potential network and facilitating contacts between individuals on issues specifically related to the state and the local community, following the practice on social networks like Facebook and Google, a locally-based political engagement can be facilitated by linking it to social networking services.

5.1.4 Crowd research

In the fields of political science and political philosophy, the Habermasian idea of a deliberative democracy has been widely discussed and developed (see e.g. Dahlberg, 2007; Dryzek, 2005; Fraser, 1985; Mouffe, 1999). However, in technological development in the area of e-participation a more nuanced understanding regarding the importance of form and structure in democracy is seldom articulated. Sæbø et al. (2008) notes in a recent review that there is a lack of "consistency or continuity in the choice of theories or research methods", and that the field focuses on empirical examples rather

than the development of theory. The only recurring theoretical reference is to Habermas's public sphere. Sæbø et al. (2008) state:

“The forms, structures, and purposes of democratic participation are much discussed in the literatures of political science and political philosophy. However, these understandings are partially and inconsistently transferred to the eParticipation literature. Without consistently and clearly articulated democratic objectives, practitioners are left to initiate projects with the weak justification that eParticipation is a necessary and worthy activity. The lack of well-considered objectives may contribute to a relatively poor success rate and certainly makes initiatives hard to evaluate.” (p. 419)

The model by Dahlberg (2011) pointing to four different positions for digital democracy that was discussed in Chapter 1, in combination with a Macro-Micro perspective, could function as an evaluation model of digital democracy practice as well as rhetoric. Here, the tool we developed could be explored further by developing it as a way to expand research collaboration around this model to a crowd of researchers. However, it requires a development of the underlying distribution system that has been developed in the tool. Even researchers are dependent on economic realities and divide their time based on what gives more or less benefits in the form of publications. In order to extend cooperation to more than a handful of researchers, a formalization of the informal economy in the research is required. Here it might be interesting to systematize the cooperation in an economy of microelements of research rights. This might also be a way of creating greater transparency in the research and make results available to, and more open for criticism by, a wider group of stakeholders in e-democracy, thus returning the results of research back to political practice.

5.1.5 Queer technology: technology as art

The art project *Performing the Common* (earlier name was *Performing Structure*) initially focused on exploring the norms of which technologies are carriers, as well as what ICT is actually doing in a place. By exposing the normative and structuring systems and understanding how different systems interact, one can also experiment with scenarios where some part of the system is replaced, moved, exaggerated or otherwise altered. The idea behind visualizing the underlying ideologies and norms in different technical systems is that this can lead to a further development of these systems. But this system thinking can also be used to investigate the consequences of different normative regulations. By scaling up and exaggerating certain principles or by moving a rule from one system to another, the technology can be used to examine and discuss the consequences of cultural norms.

According to hermeneutic phenomenology our understanding of a phenomenon depends on our prior understanding and our interpretation

through culture and language. The research method is, in this view, about seeing a phenomenon through different perspectives and finding ways to break with one's own pre-understanding. This tradition of breaking with one's own vision to get new perspectives and ideas is commonly used in the visual arts. Butler (1999) argues that cultural change comes from our ability to undermine the norms by distorting the language and by distance and independence. With this in mind, a system for e-participation can be a starting point for creating and exploring social situations and practices that undermine established norms by exaggerating, distorting, and mixing together different systems. What could be called a queer technology¹. By inserting the word queer, we emphasize that technology is not something given from outside but art, something we created and therefore limited through our imagination.

¹ The concept of queer technology is, not surprisingly, used with a variety of meanings. Artist Zach Blas uses it, for example, as an antithesis of rationality, for a technology "which escapes the normative logic of productivity and development" (Gaboury, 2010). For me, the expression means to escape or distort any kind of norm, not only those of productivity and development.

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I

Performing the Artist in Digital Media: A study of art students' use of communication technology

Abstract

What roles do communications on the Internet play for young visual artists? Drawing from comprehensive sources on the Internet like blogs, web pages, networking sites and digital magazines, as well as interview data from students at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, this study examines the interplay between identity positions, dominant ideologies, and discursive practices on the Internet. The study shows a picture where competing concepts of the artist create uncertainty about how an artist should be. The ideology expressed isn't something new, however the discursive practices have changed. The artist is still performed as an oracle that must be explained by others, but when the art world through globalization became more difficult to overview it is not enough to hang at gallery openings, a digital business card in the form of a website makes the curator's work easy. It must however still look as if someone else does the framing.

The common denominator for the students who used the web more directly to communicate and collaborate was not that they were especially skilled in technology but that they appeared in various creative fields and came from an upper and upper middle class.

Keywords: artistic identity, computer-mediated communication, digital art, art education, visual method

1. Introduction

In visual art, the technology has always placed limits on how the work of art is produced and distributed (Alexander 2003). Art worlds are not isolated cultures but are highly influenced by the changes in the surrounding society (Baumann, 2001; DeNora, 1991; Dimaggio, 1982; Levine, 1990; Lopes, 2002; Watt, 1984). The production of culture perspective that has developed in sociology since the 1970's shows how the elements of culture are shaped by the systems within which they are produced and preserved (Richard A. Peterson & Anand, 2004). The music business is an example of how external factors such as technological change have altered production conditions and production methods (Alexander, 2003; Ebare, 2004; Zentner, 2006). In the case of the visual media, the ability of the technology to make it easy to manipulate, copy and distribute images has challenged the exclusivity of art and the artist's role (Dahlgren, 2005; Paul, 2003). The global art world is a culture that is practiced largely through the publication of books and articles in newspapers (Bydler, 2004). Curators, critics and art historians have been important gatekeepers in this community. Nowadays, digital media technically provide artists with an opportunity to communicate their art in a global context and to a wider audience. However, research contains very little information about how visual artists actually use the Internet to communicate themselves, and available studies shows that the net primarily is used as a conventional platform for display (Clarke III & Flaherty, 2002; Mäkinen, 2009). When looking at comparable fields like the music industry where the production conditions have changed the business radically due to file sharing, there is an extensive amount of information on how artists should promote themselves using social media. The research on how they actually do communicate themselves shows that Internet gives artists a direct channel to their fan base and enables collaborative networks on distance, but that the legitimacy of the music industry still is an important gatekeeper when it comes to promoting the artist and setting the norms (Johnson, 2011; Marontate, 2005).

In Sweden, the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (KKH) is one of the most important gatekeepers to the art world, and it is also known as one of the more conservative institutions (D. Ericson, 1988; Gustavsson et al., 2008). Therefore it is interesting to see how individuals at this place adapt themselves to the changes in communication technologies. The students that enter now are so called digital natives; they grew up with the Internet and mobile information technology. The school offers the latest digital technology and new departments dedicated to digital media. Therefore it is interesting to see how the art students use these opportunities and how these technology changes interplay with their professional identity building.

To understand the use of technology for communication, I have started with a few basic questions about how artists are created and how and by whom this is mediated. Questions were answered by an ethnographic study of art students at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (KKH), focusing on their use of the Internet as a mean of communication. During a five-month stay at the school I examined how the artist identity of 50 students was performed on the web, and 10 students were interviewed about their views on marketing in general.

The study shows that even though the technology in theory gives the individual unlimited opportunities for communication, the structurally organized positions the artist can take in order to be accepted in the art world are limited. When the physical limits between fine and mass culture disappear, the conventional identity of the artist becomes even more important to maintain.

In the following Chapter 2 the theoretical background to the investigation is summarized, in Chapter 3 method and data is described. The results of the investigation is summarized and analyzed in Chapter 4. Finally the main conclusions are discussed in Chapter 5.

2. Identity, recognition and domination in the arts

As many scholars from Goffman (1959) to Butler (2004) have showed, identity isn't something stable but rather something designed and created by constant repetitions. By performing the norm for being an artist you become an artist. The fact that identity is created does however not mean that the individuals are free to change their identity; language and society's norms and rules place limits on what is conceivable and feasible (Foucault, 1982; Hirdman, 2003). Although the ability for the individual to create an identity that goes beyond the conventions in this perspective can be seen as rather limiting, there are opportunities for change. They can, like Hirdman (2003) suggests, come from outside in the form of economic, technological and political changes. They can, as Butler(1999) suggests, come from within the individuals themselves through their ability to undermine the norms by distorting the language and by distance and independence. According to Bourdieu (2000) the discursive established norms and the economic and political structures interact. The ability to act is limited by the dominant ideology and discursive practices and the existing political and economic positions, but within these frameworks, by obtaining a sound knowledge of the field, the individual can change her opportunities and also alter the rules of the game (ibid).

Bourdieu's view of the art world as a field in which different subfields and genres are fighting over a limited space has often been criticized as being too concerned with power and domination. Becker (1982) represents a less structuralistic and more agent-centered idea of the field of art, as a network of smaller interconnected art worlds, consisting of individuals sharing the same interest. Becker's rhetoric is less warlike than Bourdieu's, and more optimistic regarding the individual's opportunities to create her own conditions. He stresses the possibility of creating alternative art worlds when the established ones don't fit. Becker considers that every art world is a meaning-making culture with its own conventions, and way of making art. These conventions create both limits and meaning, but without these boundaries, there is no art (Alexander, 2003; Becker, 1982). Even though Bourdieu and Becker represent different perspectives in the sociology of art, they share an approach to art as a collective process. Heinich (2009) questions this collective perspective, suggesting that sociology should create explanation based on understanding of the actors' own logic, where art is most often seen as an expression of a unique individual and not something collective. She also suggests that motivation in art has more to do with recognition of peers rather than an urge to gain power and dominate. Heinich (1997) claims that singularity has been the central value regime of art since modernism. In her study of Van Gogh she shows how the modernistic concept of art is a matter of belief, where the artist functions like a martyr for a religion that worships singularity (Ibid). Singularity is not a stable regime but something that coexists in parallel with other values, such as the value regime of the artisan or the value regime of the professional networker. These unstable paradoxical individual belief systems are what constitute art.

But even though identity can be seen as something performed, artists want to be recognized by their peers, and art can be understood as a belief, research shows that some actors seem to have greater right than others to take this identity and claim this belief. Why Bourdieu looked at art in military terms like field, positions and strategies is obvious when you look at the visual arts field in which major economic, political and cultural values are at play. Here structuring factors like class, sexuality, gender and ethnicity play a significant role (Braden, 2009; DiMaggio, 1987; DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1990; Levine, 1990; Singerman, 1999; Widegren, 2008). Current research on the Swedish art world also shows that it is easier to survive as an artist if you come from a family with extensive cultural capital (Gustavsson et al., 2008). Class also has an impact on what kind of culture one engages in, and research in Europe and the U.S. shows that there is a correlation between class and the breadth of cultural consumption; people with higher socioeconomic status are to a higher degree cultural omnivores (DiMaggio, 1987; Lamont & Fournier, 1992; Richard .A. Peterson & Kern, 1996; Richard A. Peterson & Simkus. Albert,

1992; Van Eijck, 2001). Research on the digital divide shows the importance of class for the use of digital media, also when looking at how the technology is used; whether it is for consumption or production of online material (Schradié, 2011).

The adoption of digital technologies in the visual arts is so recent that it is difficult to say how they will affect art, but the way artists perceive the technology can at least create a better understanding of the processes that takes place when production conditions changes. An art school is a place where intersecting issues like artistic identity, discourse, and external factors such as technology arise, and therefore an interesting place for a study. Here the artist is legitimized in relation to different ideas about what an artist is. An art school is also an important gatekeeper in the art world.

Marontate's (2005) research in a music technology program in a rural Canadian university also shows how technology enables the individual contacts with the central music industry, at the same time as the hegemonic norms in this art world create limits on the way communication technologies are used. Even though the students set up their own system of production and find alternative distribution channels they still have to adapt to the conventions of their musical style to establish their credibility. Uimonen's (2009) comprehensive study of an arts college in Tanzania shows how the use of technology is embedded in local and national relations and imaginations. Here technology not only has practical importance for getting access to the global art world, but is also symbolic, as a sign of modernity.

As this research shows, information and communication technology has to be seen as something that is embedded in a social context, something which exists owing to this context but also changes it. To understand how communication technology is used at a place like the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (KKH), and how it is an instrument of change at KKH, one must look at what Horst & Miller (2006) call a "communicative ecology", communication in a broad sense through oral speech and real billboards to travel and information technology.

In Sweden, the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (KKH) is one of the most important gatekeepers to the art world (D. Ericson, 1988; Gustavsson et al., 2008). Here the emphasis is not on teaching a range of artistic techniques; the majority of students have already spent several years of art studies in preparatory art schools. The focus is more on creating an identity for the artist on the art scene (Gustavsson et al., 2008). While the school offers the latest technological tools of artistic production such as 3D scanners and courses in animation and web production, KKH is also known as one of the most conservative institutions (D. Ericson, 1988; Gustavsson et al., 2008). Therefore it is interesting to see how actors in this context adapt to the changes in communication technologies.

3. Methods and data

The data used in this paper comes from an investigation of fifty students' web mediation that was followed up by semi-structured interviews with ten of the students. The result of the web investigation was thus the starting point for the questions in the interviews, as a way of obtaining additional perspectives.

An Internet search combines much of the information that is publicly accessible for a person operating in Sweden, and this also includes some analogue media as most of the newspapers are available online. In this study I have started by looking at the representation of fifty art students' identities in the multimodal environment of the Internet in the form of text, images, sound, video, animation and typography on web pages, as well as in social networks. Here representation does not mean a representation of the physical body like an avatar in a game, but identity-representation in a broad sense, i.e. the discursive practice that makes the artist into an artist, not least the works of art. Opposed to most uses of visual methods, where researchers focus on a constrained aspect of the information like profile images on Facebook or text-based conversation

in chat rooms, the focus has been on the visual and verbal representation as a whole (See example in Appendix A). The technical aspects of the information, whether it is a photo of a painting or an interactive video, are treated as expressions of the discourse and thus a part of the whole. Not only the actual mediation, but the framing context has been investigated, whether the students' name occurs in established art contexts on the web, in articles about art in Swedish newspapers, press releases to news bureaus and information from art institutions like art schools and art galleries, in alternative contexts and whether they themselves present themselves as artists. It is important to understand the interactive and social dimensions of social networks like Facebook and Myspace (see for example the discussion by Doostdar (2004) and Murthy (2008)), and active user identities have been created in the most used social networks (see example in Appendix B).

I use the concepts that Baumann (2007) borrowed from theories about social movements in order to interpret the material. Here the concept pair *ideology* and *discourse* is extended with the concept of *frame* that links discourse to a broader context and indicates a conscious sender as opposed to more unreflected discursive practices. I am also interested in who is framing and whether the student seems to have control over the information:

- What ideologies about the artist are expressed?
- What discursive practices are used: form, color, technology, place and genre.
- Who frames the art and the artist?
- Has the student control over the information?

The discourses expressed were summarized in three different ideologies that represent the most prominent directions in the material as a whole:

- *Artisan*: skilled at e.g. painting nature, or at editing video.
- *Singular*: genial outsider who creates from her inner self.
- *Networker*: Makes art in an art context.

After having conducted searches on ten or so of the students, I arrived at a combination of different searches that created the most fine-meshed net. All in all the following sites/search tools provided many hits: Google Search, Facebook, Myspace, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter and Domain Search. The result was sorted on technology and summarized (as in Appendix C).

The Royal Institute of Art accepts about 25 students each year. Students are usually about 25 years of age, with slightly more women than men. Two groups were examined, first-year and fifth-year students, in order to obtain a variation in age and at the same time an opportunity to make comparisons between students who have just started school and those who have completed 4 years. The study year groups examined consisted of a total of 50 students; 23 first-year students (9 men and 14 women) and 27 fifth-year students (10 men and 17 women).

The results of the data gathering in the form of websites on the Internet could be analyzed in several ways, such as "which different genres of art were represented in the material", or "on which kind of sites I could find them". The students represent a heterogeneous group in terms of forms of expression, from surreal paintings to charcoal drawings, performance, sound art and film. Many students used a diversity of expressions. But the most striking difference between the various students was not art genre but type of web activity, and this is why I chose this as a starting point for a classification. I first divided up the students into two groups; those whose activities made it clear and easy to find and to define them artistically, and those who were difficult to find and difficult to understand in terms of what kind of art they did. The first group was evident in various ways. Some students were primarily framed by others, in newspaper articles about art exhibitions and the art school's reports about who had obtained scholarships or entered some university college, this ideal type is called *Icon*.

Icons can also frame themselves on self-produced websites but they are then published as if someone else was the sender. Another more active framing is performed by the students themselves, by creating their own website and addressing visitors directly or by posting contributions in discussions on the web, this ideal type is called *Agent*.



Figure 1. *Icon*, framed by journalist that emphasizes the student's artisan skills and singularity.



Figure 2. *Agent*, creating a blog about artistic collaborations.

The other large group of students was unclear in various ways. Some were easy to find but were present primarily as art students, framed as a name of a participant in various art school contexts but without a clear artistic profile, this ideal type is called *Student*.

Another group was not far from invisible, but circulated in art contexts in different ways, this group was called *Indefinable*. A few students were completely invisible.



Figure 3. *Student*, framed by art institutions, here as an image and a name on an art school web page.



Figure 4. *Indefinable*, framed by other artists in arty contexts. Here in a blog as a name of a person that helps an artist hanging an exhibition.

At least two semi-structured interviews were carried out with students of each ideal type and of each year group; this was to obtain contact with as heterogeneous group as possible. The students received a question to think about in advance:

If you would explain to someone (younger) what you do to market yourself as an artist, what would you say?

In connection with the 20-40 minutes long tape recorded interviews, which in some cases were supplemented with questions via e-mail, I presented the results of the survey of the students' web sites so that the informants could be able to arrive at their own interpretations of this material.

4 Results and analysis

4.1 Co-existing artistic ideologies in the online mediation

Even though the students are trained to be cultural entrepreneurs with workplaces in relative openness they do not differ in their use of blogs and online communities in purely quantitative terms compared with Swedes in comparable age groups (SCB 2010; Findahl 2009); 20-50% have a web page, 15-22% have a blog and 61% uses social networks (See Appendix D). The most striking difference between the various students' online mediation was type of web visibility,

which is why this became the main grid for analysis. Here some students were difficult to identify as artists, while some were clearly described. The different artistic ideologies expressed often co-existed in parallel.

Table 1. Different types of visibility as artist on the Internet when searching for name of students at the Royal Institute of Art (KKH) autumn 2009 divided by ideal types.

		<i>Unclear</i>		<i>Clear</i>	
<i>Woman</i> = W <i>Man</i> = M	Invisible	Indefinable	Students	Icons	Agents
Co-existing artistic ideologies		Singular Networker	Singular	Artisan Singular Networker	Networker
Information check		Yes, not visible	Poor	Yes, partly	Yes, largely
Year 1 (23 students)	M	WWWM	WM	WWWWWWMMM	WWWWMMM
Year 5 (27 students)	WMM	WWMM	WWWWWWMMM	WWWWWWMM	WWM

Among the students whose artist identity was unclear, that I call *Indefinable*, the singular ideology was strong first and foremost because they demonstrated an inability to communicate themselves and their art clearly. This group was largest in the fifth year. The *Indefinable* students also express a networker ideology since they show that they move around in several social art contexts, for example by being publishers of Flickr photo web pages from art exhibition openings or by having many people in Stockholm’s art world as friends on Facebook. The unclear art students I call *students* are presented as students and not as artists and only appear in student-related contexts. This can for example take the form of a name on a press release about a student exhibition, or a mention on an art school’s website as a former student.

The ideal type *student* occurs almost solely in the fifth year. All in all, twice as many were unclear as artists in the fifth year as in the first year. Here it is important to understand the status of The Royal Institute of Art in the Swedish art context. The school is little known outside this context, but inside it has a very high status. This is something you learn to understand in the preparatory art schools and to be a student at KKH is an important identity that might be the main legitimization of your art.

Of the students whose artist identity was clearly visible it was the group named *Icons* whose discursive practice contained all the artist ideologies. The ideology *Artisan* were not emphasized but could be said to be prominent in many cases. The material of the artwork was discussed e.g. in reviews or the craftwork elements of the work process. This might be about drawing with charcoal in a certain complicated way or using 16 mm film to get the correct grey scale. Here the framing and contextualization of the work is also important. For example that the quality of the documenting photo is high, or that the text about the artwork is well written.

The ideal type *Icon* was largely framed through others, and in the description of the art and the artist first and foremost a singular ideology emerged, where the artist’s individuality and differentness were highlighted and where others framed the art. This stereotype was foremost reproduced in local newspapers, where the journalists do not have to be an expert on art to write about it.

“Because she is not on site it is the gallery’s manager [name], who presents [name] and her work of art. [] He knows she wants to have her art without words, that it shouldn’t be talked to pieces but rather must be allowed to speak for itself.” (Quote from article about art exhibition in local newspaper)

In the above example the framing is done first by the gallery manager whose story is interpreted and edited by the journalist. The narrative is the one of the artist as a shy oracle who cannot meet an audience directly but has to be interpreted by experts.

What contradicts this romantic image of the artist is the fact that most *Icons* have their own website, which signals that they have an eye on things, and are someone that is more of a networker than an outsider. But the art and the artist are often presented in the third person on the website, as if the sender of the website was someone other than the artist.

[Name] is an artist based in Stockholm, Sweden. He was born in [year]. (student home page)

Stylistically the same graphical language as for a museum of modern art is used. This language is more refined in fifth-year students' communications. Also the student category called *Agents* can show through their graphic language that they belong to the art world, but they write in the first person, using a subjective voice. They don't only use the web to directly market themselves, but also as a tool for the organization of exhibitions and collaborative projects. *Agents* were twice as common among first-year students as among those who had entered their fifth year.

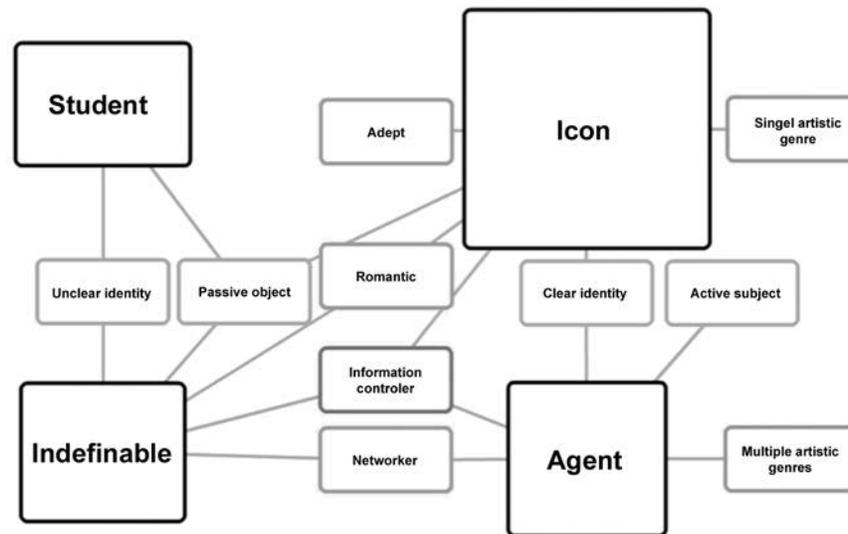


Figure 5. Four ideal types (Student, Icon, Indefinable and Agents) and how they share different categories

4.2 Contradictory opinions about the artist in interviews

In the interviews contradictory ideas about the artist often came up. A paradoxical ideology based on a romantic “childhood faith” in art, which is challenged by the official professional ideology at The Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and one’s own experiences from the art world:

This is just what I think. [laughs] I think it is very much about contacts and suchlike, and I don’t really like it and so. But I think it is like that.

[Why don’t you like it then?]

I actually think that it should be so that good things find their own path in some way, and that they become picked up and presented and go further as well. But I don’t really believe that it is so. But the fact is that when someone talks with the right people and someone has the right contacts, it is their art that is seen. (Student year 1)

Here they talk a lot about networking, it's like it is missing out on the work itself There is much talk about the network, network. It's like an extra job, and I do not know if it is always what is best. I'd rather be noticed for doing good stuff than because I'm a good networker. (Student year 1)

In these quotes the art students express their desire for an art world where an essential quality is fixed in the art object, and where art is judged on the basis of this quality. At the same time the students don't really think this belief matches reality. Another thing that is mentioned is that "good things find their own path" and "be noticed for doing good stuff" which indicates a certain temporary state, where recognition will eventually come in a distant future if one keeps doing one's own art.

Table 2. Contradictory opinions of the artist in interviews that came up, often for the same person.

Concepts about the artist	The artist's practice
The artist as passive object	The artist as active subject
Does not use Facebook	Everyone uses Facebook
Lets the art speak	Speaks for the art
Outsider	Networker
Takes big risks	Pays close attention to detail
Doesn't keep up with marketing	Takes the main responsibility for their PR
Needs no website	Website essential
Doesn't care about appearance	Makes efforts to stick out
Not average/moderate	Middle class
Clearly definable art. Credible.	Does a bit of each. Unserious.

The issue concerning appearance was also discussed in the interviews. The view was often that the important contacts were established in informal social contexts where the artist's appearance and behavior become important. Information technology has in this perspective a secondary role. It functions more like an extended business card. The students were well aware as to how an artist should behave but had difficulty in describing the artist in other than negations. Here the identity is not as Foucault (1982) suggests defined in duality with the other, rather the identity of the artist is to be the other: someone who does not use Facebook, who does not keep up with marketing, someone who does not look like all the others; someone who does not manage to dress themselves up, who does not arrive on time, does not have a cycle helmet:

[Answer to question about appearance] Here, I am nearly the only one with a bicycle helmet! But it is perhaps because I am one of the older ones. Sometimes it feels as if people do not see you when you arrive with a bicycle helmet. Maybe a true artist should not be afraid to die. [laughs]

4.3 The artist is made in relation to ethnicity, gender and class

The artist is also made in relation to ethnicity, gender and class. This is how one student with a working class background described the social environment at KKH:

There is definitely a style that the girls have, it is difficult for me to put it into words, it's bloody annoying, they look very middle class but in a hippy working class kind of way. [hm] That's how I experience it. And you can see they have money, they are so damn, I think it is damn ridiculous, that they have a... They look so clean and fresh and like that but it is also unbelievably calculated, but there are certain types of chintz, certain types of jackets, they very much have their own style. What type of label should you wear as an artist, you know. It is little more deliberate than many people think it is. It is definitely a kind of style. I think that many girls adopt an androgynous boy style, they are girls but they adopt a little more masculine style. I don't know why. And many guys are the opposite, they adopt a little girly style. Artist guys are such bloody wimps. But, I feel the women can be seen more clearly here than the men. (Student year 1)

What this quote shows is how the art students' identity is actually created along a typically ethnic Swedish upper middle-class gender relation, where one distinguishes oneself from other groups, by creating another type of masculinity and femininity than the mainstream.

Here the three interviewed *Agents* stood out by coming from families where both parents and grand parents had received higher education and/or leading positions, as well as a good economic standing. The three students with a family background in the field of culture were either from the type group *Icon* or *Indefinable*. The students who showed most awareness of class or ethnicity were those who differed from the mainstream art student and came from another class or cultural background than middle and upper-middle class Swedes. But when asking about family background most art students were reluctant to put them self in a class position.

I do not really know how I define myself in terms of class, I might have tried to avoid putting myself in another category when there are already so many you can be in. But it's not like I do not know that my parents are usually those who have least education or are most "no culture". It was perhaps no coincidence that I was the only one in the class this autumn who had never been to the Museum of Modern Art. I also believe that I refused to define it because I do not want to put myself at a disadvantage before I even attempted. Just because you do not get cultural references as a child it does not mean you are doomed to failure if you decide to get involved with something in the sphere of culture. (Student year 1)

As in the quote above, the students were aware of their position towards others, but didn't want to categorize themselves in terms of class. What also came up in the interviews and got support when discussing it in the student group and with teachers was the fact that most students felt they were not as the other students, but outside the group.

According to Bourdieu (2000) individuals adopt different strategies in the field depending on their habitus. Different variables such as ethnicity, gender and class determine the individual's possible strategies in the field. This was established in the interviews. The students whose parents have professional contact with the field, experience "no stress" in creating their own website. There is also an over-representation of children of cultural workers among established Swedish artists; the artist profession is like a guild that is partly inherited (Gustavsson et al., 2008). The students with weaker social roots in the field felt a greater need of framing their art themselves, without having a really clear idea as to whom this information was addressed. The female students in the interviews particularly felt a need to communicate their artistry on the web; they didn't to the same high degree as the men trust that this would work out "by itself". The women's assumption also concurs well with research that shows that it is easier for a man to obtain legitimacy as a visual artist than for a woman (Becker, 1982; Braden, 2009; Singerman, 1999). Of course, just by framing their art on the Internet they were doing "wrong", and as they also displayed a stereotype image of the artist, they positioned themselves outside the avant-garde. The art students that showed awareness of the conventions of the art world, but had the self-confidence to ignore these limitations using the net on their own terms, came from an upper class or upper-middle class background.

4.4 Real artists do not market themselves to the masses

In the interview I unintentionally formulated the questions in a way that made many of the students feel a bit provoked. This mistake created a discussion that was very informative. The formulation that was questioned by many was my use of the word "marketing"; if and how they marketed themselves and their art. It was obviously wrong to even think in terms of marketing. Nobody marketed themselves. But when I asked how people knew about them and their art, I got other types of answers. When I asked if they had any examples of artists that were good at marketing their art, often the same artists' names came up. But none of the students said they really liked these artists; they felt that they were too cynical, too smart. When asking the students what artists they liked and why they liked them, they often mentioned young and not so established artists that were not well known for a broader public.

[If you think about artists that you think are good, or are good at communicating, who are they?]

There are many young artists, and it is also contradictory to what I said earlier [about not being too private], but it's rather me who thinks it's a hassle if it is too personal. But I think of those young artists that blog or have websites where they post everything that happens in their art and what is happening in their lives.

[Do you have any examples?]

Sara-Vide, she has been here [at KKH] before, and one that has been a student at Konstfack [University College of Arts, Crafts and Design] and one that goes here at Mejan now. But it's not as if I intrude into their lives, it is as a kind of role they have as they post. [---] As a sort of alter ego. It feels good too when you read it, it does not feel like it's too private, but as if I read some sort of history.

[But they are younger artists then?]

Yes

[Do you think this is a way to get success?]

I do not know, but it appeals to me.

[Is this something you're willing to do yourself?]

Yes, I have set a goal, at least this year, to put up some sort of blog or website.

(Student year 5)

Here the student expresses identification with someone that she also gives her recognition. It was rather my question that made her aware that this practice could be a smart marketing tool. When asking about how they used communication technology to market their own art, the students were also reluctant to admit that they did any marketing more than having a web page. But when talking about other things, they indirectly showed they had a media awareness and a strategy for communication. Most students used technology to communicate with their network. Here a homepage or video clips on-line were something they shared with a few but important acquaintances they met through their network at social gatherings, not with a broad and unknown public.

But I have used this Vimeo, it's like Youtube but a little more serious, you can choose for yourself, here I've posted videos and then I locked it, so if I want someone to watch my stuff, the other day, a producer wanted to watch it, then I could send a link. But I do not make it available via the website. I would not liked to be exposed to others' eyes ... It's a little stalker alert. (Student year 1)

4.5 Social media seen as expression for trivialization of social relations

The preliminary result of the study was presented at an open seminar. Here especially the changes between the first and last year were discussed, and the students made me understand that some of these differences were because of structural changes at the school, and could not be explained by student's age or degree of art world socializing. We also discussed the attitude in the student groups towards the use of social networks like Facebook, and their negative attitudes towards marketing. Here an opinion came up that the reason people find their way to art is often a reaction against an over-rationalization in society, a need to avoid the language of economics and politics. The use of online social networks or marketing strategies was seen as an expression for a trivialization of communication one wanted to avoid. This fits well with the idea of the artist as being outside society, following her own singularity beyond the simplification of mass communication. But it also shows how identification and recognition by peers is more important for these young artists than the attention of a potential market.

The fact that so many students were *unclear* as artists, and particularly that so many were *unclear* in the fifth year, does not seem to be due to lack of enterprise but on the contrary it indicates that the students during their training have acquired some of the codes and strategies

that exist in the art world. In the global world of fine art it is not important to reach a large audience, but the right audience (Baumann, 2007; Thompson, 2008; Thornton, 2008). Communicating their own art on the Internet to a potential mass audience can be seen as vulgar as the most prestigious art is produced primarily for other cultural workers and an exclusive market (Bourdieu, 1993, 2000; Flisbäck, 2006). The artists that the art students mentioned as being interesting artists and role models were most often rather young and unknown.

Both the survey of the students' websites and the interviews showed competing ideas about what an artist is. Just as Heinich (2009) emphasizes, different ideologies of art co-exists with the dominant ideology. It is mainly the romantic artist type who is depicted in reviews, on websites and in the main part of the students' description of themselves. This singular ideology is reproduced more or less deliberately. Even students who didn't embrace this modernist view of art, defined them self as outsiders, outsiders also in relation to the art context. But in practice an ideology about the artist as networker is more evident than the discursive practices on the Internet indicate. The interviews show that the majority see it as their task to frame their art carefully according to all the rules of art.

4.6 Strategies: Website that makes the artist the object

The students' experience was that even some very well established artists were difficult to obtain clear information about on the Internet. Several of the students testified that teachers and professors don't see a personal website as being important.

“There are some who do not believe that one should have websites, some older, they say that one only requires a portfolio, and all that. Some people here at the school say so, I think, teachers and so. It was he [name] who is here at school now. [---] I do not think he has a website, but maybe he has, but he did not think we needed one.[---]

No, I have never felt any pressure on me about it. It is mostly a discussion among students, but I've never heard a professor say that I ought to have one.”

All the students that were interviewed thought that having a website of their own was good. 35% of first-year students and 52% of fifth-year students have more or less developed their own websites and/or blogs. The aesthetics and framing in these pages showed most clearly that they placed themselves within the contemporary artistic field. Especially on the websites of fifth-year students the art was framed as in a superior art gallery. It was stripped down and simple, black and white, as in the art gallery web sites in Fig. 6. There was usually not too much text, but only the most essential information about the art and the artist written in the third person, sometimes with references to fashionable art philosophers. Almost none of the students work with information technology as artistic material in itself, with the opportunities for interactivity and collective action that the technology makes possible, at least not on the web. The websites are used as a way to frame the art as art. When the art is shown outside the established institutions like the art gallery or art museum it becomes difficult to claim that what you do is art (Alexander, 2003; Becker, 1982). This is probably why different visual markers are more important, such as typeface, choice of color, art genre, etc. These visual markers in combination with references to the art world's gatekeeper's signal that the artist is in a social and art historical context. Marontate's (2005) study at a music technology program in a Canadian university showed how norms limit the use of technology even in a highly pro-technic art world. Here the students carefully framed themselves using the same styles and expressions as established music institutions to clearly signal their coveted position.

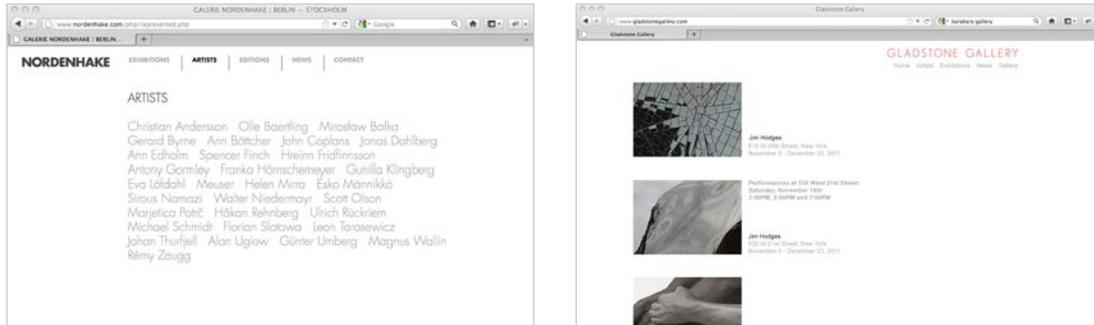


Figure 6-7. Webb designs that connote exclusivity and taste, from Gallery Nordenhake and Gallery Barabara Gladstone.

The art is simply more traditional and less boundary crossing when the physical limits between fine and mass culture disappear. Today it is relatively easy to edit one’s own film or do a website with audio and animation without an entire production company, but even though the technology in theory gives the individual unlimited opportunities for expression, the structurally organized positions the artist can take in order to be accepted in the art world are limited. A website that is too “advertisement-like” can in this context do more harm than good.

In the survey of the students’ websites the women were initially seen much more clearly than the men, and more men than women were invisible. But just because the students couldn’t be found under their own names doesn’t mean that they were invisible, two of the male students I initially failed to find upon closer inspection proved to be very active under their alter ego.



Figure 8-10. Photos from Sara-Vide Ericson’s blogg

Several students highlighted the former student Sara-Vide Ericson’s (2010) website as an example of good self-promotion. Here the artist, as part of an otherwise tightly maintained website, lays out images and comments about her own romantic artistic life in bohemian art studios and at gallery openings. Ericson has literally turned the artist identity into a product which is demonstrated among other works of art on the website. This blogging artist does not frame the art, but is rather a work of art in the form of a reality show from the art world.

Here one can see that the ideology expressed has not changed appreciably but that the discursive practices have changed. The artist is still an oracle that must be explained by others, but since the art world through globalization became more difficult to overview it is not enough to hang at gallery openings. A digital business card in the form of a website makes the curator’s work easy. It must however still look as if someone else does the framing.

4.7 Ways out: Alternative art worlds

A few students, the ideal typed *Agent*, actively communicated their art through digital media, directly addressing visitors on their own blogs or by using social forums to organize collaborations and events. When comparing the artistic genres and fields of activity of *Agents* and *Icons* an interesting pattern emerged. *Agents* represented a larger diversity in terms of artistic genres and they were also more often active in multiple artistic fields (as shown in Appendix E).

It was not, as one might assume, the use of digital technology that connected the *Agents* artistically. The connection was the link to cultures that emphasize network and collective processes, like open source, feminist activism or dance performance and especially that they had experience from different art worlds and worked in several different genres. One student in the fifth year who acted as an *Agent* saw information technology as a means of finding one's own creative community:

It feels like a very difficult way to become a well-known artist who is mentioned in the big media, and regularly as well. So, the odds of being successful are very low. I think that it feels like a sense of security to believe that it is possible to find other ways too. I think it is possible. You don't have to be big, you can still find your audience.

[Where have you got your conviction from?]

I think it is much about the [Internet] culture that I grew up with. The fact that what I mostly listen to is smaller bands. I don't think they earn any big money, but they still keep on with their thing.

It is above all about trying to find your own niche. It is perhaps something the Internet has helped with too. Finding others who are doing similar things as you. [Yeah] And who are interested in the things you do. I do not see it as obvious to reach out to galleries and the classic art world. It [my work] borders onto many other areas, music, text, design, illustration and suchlike too. (Year 5 student)

This student's motivation is recognition among peers, rather than domination. If there is no place within the established culture there is always the possibility of creating a new one with like-minded people (Becker, 1982). Here the technology not only connects different art worlds, but creates new ones with their own distribution system, scenes and audiences worldwide.

5. Concluding remarks

What is interesting is how the students handle competing ideologies about how an artist should be. On one hand, they see the Internet as an obvious means to self-access information about an art world that is difficult to overview. They don't want to take a chance and they believe that they don't need to do anything to market themselves. On the other hand, it is precisely the exclusivity and the inaccessibility that turns art into Art. As visual artists, they must be accessible but play hard-to-get in order not to be perceived as "cheap". The students' self-produced websites signal this clearly through their formal language and their economical text. Another way to continue to be a romantic artist object and yet accessible and searchable is to turn the artist identity into an alter ego. The strategy of adopting an alias is, however, not particular to digital media. To operate under an alias (like Miss Universum or Clyde Angel), or group name (like Group Material, Superflex or WochenKlausur), or a principle (Fluxus or Adbusters), is a recognized strategy in the art world. It can be seen as an exercise of power or as a play with the world's need for idols and fetishes. Playing roles and staging events explore and simultaneously create these roles and events. The word performativity often comes up when the students talk about their art or that of other students. Here you can see a strategy like Sara-Vide Ericsons (2010), who creates an alter ego, as a way of pushing the artist myth. Following Butler (1999) this could be seen as a way to undermine the identity by exaggerating it. By exaggerating the myth of the artist in a staged, online narrative about young artists who eat noodles to save money to afford canvas and, at the same time, actively control the process acting as director of the story. But this blogging artist does not really frame her art, she rather turns the conflict between being an outsider and being a networker into art: a work of art in the form of a reality show from the art world.

The question is whether it is possible to even conceive anything outside the artist's norm. Probably the norm is just reproduced; to exceed the norm is the norm in the art world. The

ideology does not need to have changed just because the discursive practice has changed. Students' adaptations to the standards of the global art world can be seen as an example of how communication technology does not actually change the culture, but can be a way to maintain and strengthen the culture.

What, then, is required to change the culture and break the norm (of the norm-breaking outsider!) of what an artist does? According to Butler (1999) what is required in order to place oneself above the norms of identity that exist in all groups is distance, an ability to be without the endorsement of others in the group. Since this allows for a relaxation of the norms, a renegotiation of what it means to e.g. be an artist is possible. What unites the students who act as *Agents* is that they work within many artistic disciplines and appear to participate in several different networks. It is quite simple to see that this anchoring in several different cultures gives the individual perspective and space for renegotiation regarding the norm for the group's identity. A space, which decreases the strength of the dominant ideology and, in the long term, contributes to a renegotiation of the ideology. The role of technology in this context is something that facilitates the individual's movement between different cultures. Another way of regarding the students' anchoring in several art worlds is that it provides them with the opportunity to compare and in this way gain a deeper understanding of the structures. Bourdieu (2000) emphasizes the importance of understanding the field in order to change it. Important here is to see how this understanding of the field intersects with class. The students in the interviews that used the net to communicate their art directly and used it as a way of organizing collaborations and events, not only acted on different artistic fields, they also came from families with high levels of education and good finances. Here the connections between research on cultural patterns and social stratification (DiMaggio, 1987; Lamont & Fournier, 1992; Richard A. Peterson & Kern, 1996; Richard A. Peterson & Simkus. Albert, 1992; Van Eijck, 2001), and research about the digital divide (Schradi, 2011; Selwyn, 2004) are of interest. The groups of people that make the most out of the communication possibilities on the Internet are already privileged. The technology just enables the cultural omnivore from the higher class to expand her interest on a global level.

To sum up the investigation, a picture emerges where two competing concepts of the artist create uncertainty about how an artist should be: like the romantic concept of the singular artist or like the institutional concept of the artist who is collectively created by the art world's institutions. This applies to someone who appears as an outsider but in practice is a networker. The ideology expressed isn't something new, but the discursive practices have changed. For an older generation of artists a personal website is, for example, considered as vulgar. An artist should not do direct marketing to a wider audience. For a younger generation a personal website is something that is considered valuable, but not as a mean of communicating directly to a wider audience but as a traditional artist's portfolio whose fastidious content requires a good understanding of contemporary art to be detectable. The most important interpretation and presentation of the art is still made by others.

Digital media however make contact with alternative art worlds easier as a possible way to change. The self-esteem and knowledge that comes with education and money makes it easier to make use of this opportunity.

7. Acknowledgements

My thanks to Love Ekenberg and Harko Verhagen for their valuable comments.

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Appendix A

Example of analysis of the visual and verbal representation as a whole

Example of how different discourses of the artist are expressed on personal web pages through a combination of graphical styles, technologies and language.

Example 1

A blog with a background in different shades of gray-blue. In the middle a picture of a landscape painting in similar style as the background. The picture is framed with a black border on a gray field in a different tone than the background. The blog's content-rich menu bar consists of white text on a green-blue framed box with a shaded frame. The text is a bold san-serif. The language is a mixture of blog's default English menu and descriptions in Swedish. There are several icons that indicate that there is more information to see and that a larger picture can be downloaded.

Here the artist has obviously used a blog tool and added a template that matches the style of the paintings on display, in a matter that does not follow the conventions. The blog is situated on another person's personal homepage. The site looks self-made and the introduction text is also very personal and direct:

“Hi everyone! Welcome to my gallery on the net! My name is [...] and can be reached at [...]. Do not hesitate to contact me if you want to know anything about any painting! Furthermore, you can comment on the pictures if you click on them, just so you know! :)”

The language is Swedish which narrows the target group. The title states “artist” [konstnär] and the artworks are also labeled in different categories, like paintings, drawings, photos. But there is no information on size or price. But each artwork can be rated and commented on.

Discourses about the artist: Here the artist is an active person who can speak for herself to anyone interested. The art is nothing exclusive, but a craft, and the artist is a worker. She shows mastery in different genres but doesn't seem to have any certain theme she follows. What she doesn't master though is the language of the art world, why she positions herself outside the network.

Example 2

A web page with a white background. At the top a simple menu item with a few headlines in capital letters in a gray san-serif. Centered in the white field, a picture from an art gallery that displays the student's paintings.

Here the style is much more strict. It does not follow the styles or colors of the art works on display, but rather contrasts them. It looks as though a skilled graphic designer has been involved in the creation of the website, but probably it is the teacher in web design at the school that has been helpful. It is a static page without the possibility to comment or rate the content. The domain name is the same as the artist's name and is also owned by the artist and hosted on a web hotel. The background is white and there is plenty of space around text and images, just like in an exclusive art catalogue. The purpose of the site is never declared, the information given is minimal; contact information, brief cv, images of work. Each work is presented together with the title, production year, size and material. There are no prices, but the site refers to the address of an art gallery. There are no labels to the work. Different genres of art, foremost paintings and animations, are simply presented as “works”. Several of the artworks are documented in an art context that shows that the art works have been on display in environments that look like art museums and galleries. Links to more information go to mediations by others, like press releases from art institutions.

Discourses about the artist: Here the artist is an exclusive object who does not speak directly to her audience. The target group speaks English, and the tone is not personal. The artworks and the titles of the artworks connote physicality, self-image and feelings, and are all concerned with the same theme.

Appendix B

Example of data collection sheet for a student

Year 1	Student B
Ideology	Singular; does not self publish artworks; the theme in the art is to express own strong feelings. Networker; Active in social media, present in many databases
Discursive practice	Art genre: Film Graphical style: High art dominates; simple spacious design, white background, san-serif typeface like Helvetica or Arial, brief information. Contexts: Uses Facebook and social networks about film. Shows up in several film databases. Name on film school web page. Articles in newspaper. Listed on the Art Grants Committee homepage. Information both in Swedish and in English. Does not seem to have her own web page.
Framing	The student does approximately 2/6 of the framing, 3/5 is done by institutions like film databases and art schools, 1/6 by journalists.
Control, target	Low control over the information. Target group is the professional art network.
Distribution	Over 120 different sites of information
Comment	The student has worked with a famous filmmaker, which is why the student's name appears in many film databases. This makes the student seem more established than what might be the fact. At first I thought this student was very active, but when I got a better understanding of how the film databases operate I understood that the student had no active part in this framing.

Appendix C

Students' Internet use follows average use

The students do not differ in their use of blogs and online communities in purely quantitative terms compared with Swedes in comparable age groups. Ownerships of personal websites are higher than average, but personal websites among fifth-year students were often a result of a course in web publishing, and the website were sometimes not used after the course which is why the high numbers of personal websites should not be overvalued.

Table A1. The number of students that have a website, blog or use the social forums Facebook and Myspace, compared with Swedes of similar age.

<i>Media</i>	<i>Students year 1 22-35 years</i>	<i>Students year 5 25-40 years</i>	<i>Swedes in general</i>
Website	35%	52%	Difficult to find comparable statistics but: 12 % 16-74 years have registered own domain name 20 % 16-74 years publish material on personal website
Blog	22%	15%	22% in age group 16-35 age
Facebook	43%	74%	61% of Swedes in age 18-35 years are members of an online community. Facebook is the largest.
Myspace	39%	22%	

Source: Web survey, SCB (2010) & Findahl (2009).

Appendix D

Table A2. Representation of fields of activity and artistic genres among the ideal types Agent and Icon.

Fields of activities for Icons	Field : Genre (Icons)	Fields of activities for Agents	Field : Genre (Agents)
Icon 1: Visual Art + Film	Fashion: Fashion design	Agent 1: Visual Art	Film: Experimental film
Icon 2: Visual Art	Film: Script writing	Agent 2: Visual Art	Film: Scenography
Icon 3: Visual Art	Music: Rock music	Agent 3: Visual Art + Film	Literature: Poetry (2)
Icon 4: Visual Art	Visual art: Drawing (2)	Agent 4: Visual Art + Literature	Photography: Photo art
Icon 5: Visual Art + Music	Visual art: Painting (8)	Agent 5: Visual Art + Literature	Photography: Photo journalism
Icon 6: Visual Art	Visual art: Installation	Agent 6: Visual Art+ Photography	Politics: Feminist activities
Icon 7: Visual Art	Visual art: Animation	Agent 7: Visual Art+ Politics	Visual art: Conceptual art
Icon 8: Visual Art	Visual art: Performance	Agent 8: Visual Art + Film	Visual art: Curating
Icon 9: Visual Art + Fashion	Visual art: Sculpture	Agent 9: Visual Art	Visual art: Drawing (3)
Icon 10: Visual Art	Visual art: Sound (2)	Agent 10: Visual Art + Photography	Visual art: Painting (2)
Icon 11: Visual Art	Visual art: Video (2)		Visual art: Performance (2)
Icon 12: Visual Art			Visual art: Sound art
Icon 13: Visual Art			Visual art: Street art
Icon 14: Visual Art			Visual art: Video (2)
Icon 15: Visual Art			Visual art: Photography (2)
Icon 16: Visual Art			
Icon 17: Visual Art			

REFLEXIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

In the field of e-democracy, what is mostly emphasized is the ability to create a neutral place for deliberative discussions and voting, where the view is that technology can enable a stronger democracy. Most important, focus is on the nation state, not on democracy on a global level. In a democracy initiative on a global scale one cannot only deal with the questions of what should be discussed and in what way. First of all the question about representation has to be answered: who the participants are that are part of democracy. In order to create technologies that support democracy initiatives at a global level, it is not enough to create methods to set the agenda and framework for discussion, but it is also important to have a well thought out idea about how those who participate will be selected and on what grounds. In a micro-global perspective, in the collaborative network, this is about creating incentives that support a democratic culture, an awareness of how to go about involving everyone in the conversation. With this in mind we have developed a discussion platform that uses a radical democracy as a benchmark. Based on democratic meeting techniques and social media and grounded in a participatory design process, basic principles for a groupware are formulated containing typical democratic features such as voting and discussion, but taking user activities and reactions into account and clarifying the individual's activities in relation to the group. The result of the design process is a Wiki-like prototype where the participants' reputations are measured and transformed through a dynamic voting process. This can clarify the representativeness of the discussion at stake, showing whose positions and interests are put forward, providing a method for measuring the quality of online discussion.

Keywords: E-Participation, Meeting techniques, Diversity, Collaboration online

1. Introduction

Despite the rapid growth of social networks that indicates that the political discussion takes place elsewhere than at governmental web sites, the research field has a governmental perspective rather than a participant perspective (Macintosh, Coleman, & Schneeberger 2009). Instead, the major part of the technology-driven research in the field of e-democracy is characterized by a technologically deterministic discourse, where technology is seen as an unproblematic opportunity to deepen a deliberative democracy within the nation state (Dahlberg 2011). The current more nuanced discussion of a Habermasian democratic model taken place in the field of political science and political philosophy is missing (Macintosh et al. 2009; Sæbø, Rose, & Skiftenesflak 2008). Here the idea of a deliberative democracy has been widely

discussed and developed (Dahlberg 2007; Dryzek 2005; Fraser 1985, 2000, 2005; Mouffe 1999).

Dahlberg (2011) suggests a model that could clarify the gap between different research areas and show what discourses about democracy are present in e-democracy development by creating four positions for digital democracy: liberal-individualist, deliberative, counter-publics, and autonomist Marxist. Dahlberg (2011) argues that most of the development of e-democracy is situated in the left part of the field. Here a liberal-consumer paradigm dominates that is about giving citizens better service, increase accessibility and information transparency, simply to improve government “customer service“ through flexible information systems and more informed decision making. But it is to some extent also about changing the representative system by creating room for deliberative discussion on various issues, both in order to gather information and to anchor the political decisions.

In the right part of the field there are less investments in the development of technologies for e-democracy. But it is perhaps here that the major development of democracy has occurred. Not for individual countries but for global movements and community-based communities of interest. The counter-public position is about grassroots activism, network-based organizations built on shared-interest bases. Internet is a cost-effective way to organize the group and articulate opinions, and can also provide links to other similar interests globally. Democratization is also at a micro level within companies and between individuals in a network-based form of production that is facilitated by the rapid exchange of information communication that technologies allow.

If you let these four positions be the corners of a square box, one can identify four key aspects. Democracy can be seen in a macro perspective as a global framework which can be reformed by local authorities in supporting a more deliberative process (Macro / Local). Democracy in a macro perspective can also be about giving global NGOs more power (Macro / Global). Democracy can also be seen from a micro perspective as the local citizen's rights in relation to the State (Micro / Local), or a way to act in relation to other global citizens (Micro / Global).

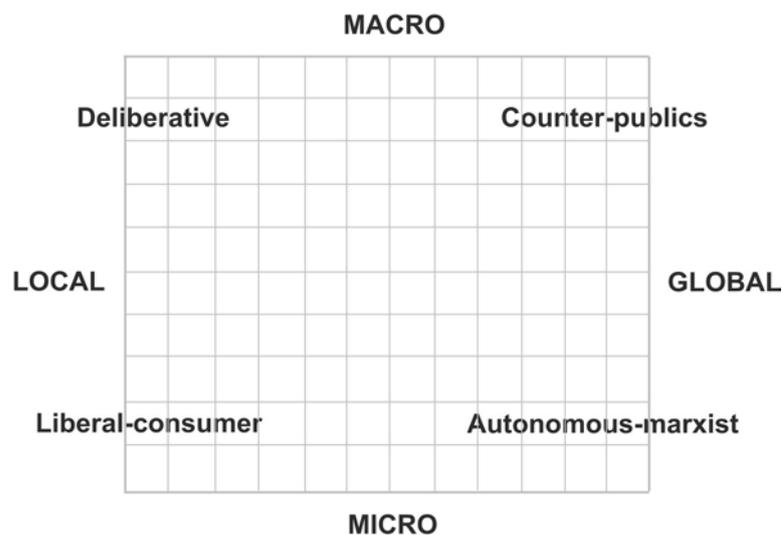


Figure 1. Map of four democratic positions in relation to local/global and macro/micro processes.

We are interested in developments in the lower right map position, democratic techniques for globally scattered micro-cultures. It's about means of production for a creative collaborative process. Democratic skills that are not constrained by nation-state thinking, but that independently and dynamically define demos.

Anderson(1991) argues that the nation state developed and held together thanks to the printing press which spread of a common culture to a geographically defined language area. This “imagined community“ was thus held together by the exchange of information that created a homogeneous culture in areas that previously consisted of culturally distinct village communities. Today imagined communities are globally created. Thanks to the Internet, shared cultures can more easily hold together and develop without geographical limitations. But according to Fraser (2005) most of the political theories build on a normative vision of the nation state as what constitutes demos. Within its geographical domain, citizens have equal rights to participate in the design of this state. In contrast to this nation thinking the “state”, or “common” for an interest based group is defined in other ways. Here the creation of identity is not defined primarily by geography, but built up around an interest, such as “environment”, “star wars” or “Karlberg's football club”.

The hegemonic model of democracy is also based on a norm of equality, which may mean that it can be difficult to deal with a situation where everyone does not have equal value in a “democratic” manner. Macintosh’s (2009) overview of the e-participation research shows a lack of methodology for measuring the quality of online discussion. Most discussions on the web are driven by a relatively small number of active participants, in which these are far from representative. It is not just anyone who can exploit the opportunities technology offers, to resist, create opinions, or be part of creative networks. Research on the digital divide shows the importance of class for the use of digital media, also when looking at how the technology is used; whether it is for consumption or production of online material (Schradie 2011). Gender research shows that the difference-making and discriminatory processes within and between the different groups online are reinforced rather than reduced, thanks to technology. (Dutta-Bergman 2005; Herring 2008; Kampen & Snijkers 2003; Nakamura 2001; Norris 2001; Postmes & Spears 2002; Wright 2005).

In these perspectives, one can see an interest as a sort of country, and in this virtual country, there is an unequal distribution of opportunities and recognition. In this project we have therefore based our research on theories about how a special community of interests is maintained, namely the global art world, with a view to finding principles for how a demos built on interest can be effectively enforced. These principles have guided the development of a digitally mediated collaborative system designed to strengthen democratic processes in self-interest groups. In order to find guidance for how a reflexive democratic process can be supported, we have used Fraser's definition of democratic justice and Dahl's model of democracy. We begin by describing theories of democracy in more detail in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 describes the participatory research method used for the development of ideas. Chapter 4 describes the art world from a democratic perspective. From this analysis the design principles are derived that are used in the development of a tool as described in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 discusses how the results of the design process correspond to the initial questions about what a reflexive process built on radical democratic principles might look like in practice. A summary of the outcome of the process is given in Chapter 7.

2. Theories of global democratic justice

2.1. A global radical model of democracy

Fraser (2000) argues that democratic justice includes both equal *distribution* of resources and opportunities as well as *recognition*, an acknowledgment of identity, and that it is important to understand that these two sometimes overlapping parameters are not the same thing. It is for example possible for an artist to have high status and a great cultural influence without having the financial capacity. Economically successful people may have difficulty getting their culture reflected in the media, or their sexual preferences recognized as a political right. A third parameter that is crucial to democracy is the question of who should participate (Fraser 2005). The issue of representation, that those affected by the decisions are involved in the decisions, is becoming increasingly important in a globalized world where nation state both affects and is affected by global events. It is no longer clear who should be part of the political unit. Fraser (2005) argues that most political theories are based on a normative view of the nation state and that it is important to find other ways of looking at the framework of democracy for this to develop.

Dahl's (1989) model of democracy is not based on the nation state but rather defines demos as the location that includes those affected by its decisions. It can just as easily apply to residents of a house as in a state, as well as participants in a globally dispersed community of interest. Democracy is thus a process that is not just about making decisions, but that also covers the definition of who is involved in the association. Furthermore, all participants should have an opportunity to influence what should be on the agenda and in setting the rules for decision making, and being able to make informed decisions. The democratic regime does not exist, except as a utopia, that can be used as a mirror to measure the degree of democracy in a particular situation (Hemberg 2002):

- Who is involved in the situation?
- Can they define the problem?
- Do they have equal opportunities for discussing the problem?
- Do they all agree on the rules for how decisions should be taken?
- Does everyone understand?

These criteria can be used to analyze any situation from a participatory perspective, in order to find methods to improve democracy in actual situations. In practice, these can be used as democratic techniques that not are fixed in a set of methods, but are a way of maintaining the reflexive process on a daily basis. This is also the ambition in democratic meeting techniques developed in critical pedagogy and in feminist-oriented movements. Democratic meeting techniques can be seen as a development of traditional meeting techniques where one uses an agenda, rules for speaking and voting procedures. But instead of assuming an ideal speech situation where participants are relatively equal, these techniques assumes that people do not participate on equal conditions; that they have different capacities for participation and that they are treated differently depending on interacting power structures. By varying meeting forms, by visualizing power structures, and by constantly reflecting on the meeting culture, a more democratic culture is developed (Hedenstrand 2008; Hemberg 2002). In addition to following traditional meeting procedures and informing participants in advance of important points to the agenda, the aim is to enhance participation and activity. This is, for example, done by setting the meeting

agenda together, by rotating key functions like president and secretary, by using speaking rounds to get everyone involved in the conversation early on, and by employing many different discussion forms and forms of voting (Hemberg, 2002). One method of increasing participants' awareness of the importance of power structures is to observe the conditions for dialogue in the meeting situation: who it is that gets the most space and attention and who is ignored, and how domination techniques are used (Hemberg 2002).

But what is it that motivates participation? If democracy is not seen as something that deals with the relationship between the state and its citizens but as relationships between participants in dynamic communities of interest you have to understand what motivates this involvement. Why do people engage in network-based collaborative processes, such as open source culture, which do not directly produce any gains? Keltly (2008) calls the open source culture a "recursive culture", a culture that is not just about recreating discourse but that also seeks to re-build the basic systems that limit discourse. In this public place, where participants not only express themselves in, but also are co-creators of a continual building process, the central motif for participation is to confirm their identity as participators in this collective creative process. The participants act in this perspective as highly creative subjects. It may therefore be interesting to look at the functionality in another creative field. The global art world is a culture built around a common interest that is practiced largely through the publication of books and articles in newspapers and now also by the Internet (Bydler 2004). What does community mean in this context? How "democratic" is this community?

3. Participatory design methods

Instead of searching for a general model for how community is created, this project has focused on finding a distinctive model, based on the singularities that can be found in social realities. Through the experience of the art world and theories from art sociology, we find principles to implement in a technical design solution for a network-based collaborative tool. The design was then further developed and implemented together with programmers and researchers at Stockholm University.

To explore the art world a practical design work was conducted based on a discussion in a so-called research circle. Research circles are mostly used in pedagogy and work-life research in the Scandinavian context (Härnsten 1994; Persson 2009). A research circle can be described as a study circle¹ in which experts are involved. The aim is to bring the expertise and experience of the participants involved to the inner circle of research, not only as informants but also as co-researchers and work-place developers. The group was formed by students and project students² at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm who answered an open invitation to participate. During a period of two years a group of five to seven people met together with the researcher on a monthly basis to discuss the role of the artist by sharing experiences and theories.

The initial group of seven was a heterogeneous group of people as regards gender, age and artistic genre. The average age gap was five years, the youngest was born in 1983 and the oldest in 1951, and so they all represented different generations of artists. The

¹ The study circle is an important part of the Swedish labour movement. It is a form of adult education common in Sweden where a group of people with a shared interest meets regularly to discuss a common theme. Most common are book circles around a shared reading list.

² A project student is an artist that for a particular purpose gets the opportunity to work in the workshops during a shorter period like a year.

initial group thus contained a combined experience of the development of the art concept and how this has influenced the art environment from the political action oriented figurative painting of the 1970s, to the performative acts of the 2010s. The participants' different strategies in the art world, different perspectives on the concept of art and personal relationships to the artist's identity, were rich resources for comparison and the empirical ground for the study of different theories about the art. The theories that were discussed were initiated primarily by the researcher but also chosen by the participants: From anthropological network theory, the sociology of art and different feminist approaches. Everything that felt relevant for creating a common understanding of the functionality of the art world. As a method of making abstract theories more concrete, the idea came up of translating the theories and personal experiences of the art world in a practical design of a collaborative groupware that would combine agency with structure.

In the design process different participatory design methods were used such as sketches, prototypes, cases and scenarios. Especially in the design field, various participatory methods are used to get a more informed design, grounded in the reality of potential users; ethnographic techniques as participant observation and interviews, as well as more exploratory methods like sketches and prototypes (see eg. (Buchenau & Suri 2000; Goldschmidt 1991; Houde & Hill 1997; Lim, Stolterman, & Tenenberg 2008)). Also more artistic techniques are used to involve participants as informants and co-designers such as probes, scenarios and role-playing. (Buchenau & Suri 2000; Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti 1999; Goldschmidt 1991; Houde & Hill 1997; Lim, Stolterman & Tenenberg 2008). Unlike most problem-focused design research, the aim with our project was not primarily to get a more informed design. Instead we used the design process in itself as a participatory research method, as a tool to explore the art world.

The following chapter 4 describes how the theories and experiences from the field of fine art evolved into principles that could guide a design of collaborative software.

4. Democracy in the art world

What is community in the art world, a global culture not directly characterized by the idea of equality?

- Who has the right to participate in the art world?
- How is the agenda set in the art world?
- Who participates in the discussion of the concept of art?
- How are decisions taken about what is art?
- How do you know what rules apply in the art world?

Following Heinich (1997), looking at the art world and the concept of art as a faith community, we can make use of Hemberg's (2002) model to see this community from a democratic perspective. In the following, we answer these questions by looking at how the concept of art is defined.

4.1. Who has the right to participate in the art world?

Elitism in the art world, where some people's expressions and taste dominate over others, can be seen as something profoundly undemocratic. According to Bourdieu (2000) participation is here a question of power, the understanding of the situation, and an ability to handle the codes in the field that you want to play on. Everyone can, in theory, be involved in deciding what is art. There is no central instance that

legitimizes art. Following the institutional art concept, the creation of art is a collective work, where shared norms about art and the artist are developed. In this collective development work all those who have any ideas about art are involved, from a disinterested public, to an enlightened art audience and hobby artists to professional artists and curators. For many it is an important part of their identity, to be part of the art world. According to sociologists from Goffman (1959) to Butler (2004) identity is a performative act, something we repeat and thus maintain. By acting by the rules of how, for example an artist should be, you become an artist. By doing things that look like art, they become art. Heinich (1997) compares the art with a belief system. Art is a belief in certain fundamental values we share with others, a sort of identity. Some people, of course find it easier to follow the standards of the arts than others. For example, if art is considered to be something that white Western men do best, it is difficult for a black woman to assert her artistic genius and be accepted as one of the clergy. If discussions are carried out at exclusive nightclubs it can be difficult for low-income parents with young children to participate. Participation is not on equal terms, and some decide more than others. Decisions about what is art are not taken by any central authority, but are influenced by all. But some have more influence than others, and this cultural hegemony interacts with an economic hegemony.

One principle we can note here is that while *anyone can join*, this does not mean that anyone will get recognition. It is a *decentralized system*, there is no central legislation for who counts, the rules are carried and maintained by all the participants in the system.

4.2. How is the agenda set in the art world?

From a historical viewpoint the concept of art has changed radically, starting from the Middle Ages, when the art was more like a craft, to the artist as a romantic genius following the emergence of capitalism, to the artist as collectively created by the art world's institutions, the institutional concept of art (Becker 1982; Hauser 1999; Thornton 2008). So, what is considered as art is changing. And everyone has their view of what art is, or of which art is more interesting. In principle, anyone can do what she wants how she wants. But obviously there are certain issues that count more than others. Some artists' art sells for millions while other artists may never even get the opportunity to be exhibited. Here it is important who it is that makes the art or suggests an artist; whether there is someone who has high status or that refers to someone of high status and thereby legitimizes their position. Status is co-created from different intersecting parameters such as class, age and ethnicity. Bourdieu(1993) claims that status is thus both something we are born into and something others assign to us, though it can also be developed through individual actions.

The changing status of the art world's actors is important information in the art world. What is right and what is wrong in the arts is relative and changes constantly, depending on the changing status of the actors. Co-branding is also an important feature of the art world, where the actors benefit mutually from strategic relations with the right people and places (Thompson 2008; Thornton 2008). If an important actor falls out of fashion, the status of associated actors and art genres lose value and position in the history of art.

Status is thus an important feature of the art world. To get your own perspective into the arts, you have to be the right person and have the right contacts. *Co-branding* is another important aspect, in terms of being associated with the right people and styles.

4.3. Who participates in the discussion about art?

Even though status is important when you collectively decide that certain issues are more important than others, perhaps it is not the will to dominate that is the main reason for wanting to participate in the discussion about art. Common interests and identity is what the players themselves set as an explanation for participating in various artistic fields (Gielen 2005; Heinich 2009). Bowness' (1989) description of the avant-garde in art emphasizes the recognition of peers as the main driving force. His model of four "circles of recognition" takes both time and space into account. The inner circle, whose recognition matters most, consists of the closest artistic colleagues, the second circle consists of gallery owners and collectors. The third circle consists of experts in art, critics and art historians who are often further away spatially and in time. The outermost, widest but least significant circle consists of the general public. The actors simply want to participate primarily in discussions concerning themselves, where they feel understood, where they are listened to and recognized. This recognition does not have to come directly but may well be in an uncertain future (Heinich 1997).

So there is a need to create a system that rewards the creation of joint discussions, a *discursive forum* that rewards exchange between actors. *Asynchronous communication* is another principle, the fact that the discussion can evolve over time.

4.4. How are the decisions taken about what is art?

There are no central instances of legitimization for becoming an artist or the standard for art. In the dynamic rating system of the art world artists' and art's value is decided on a daily basis through a complex evaluation system situated in each action of the system. In order to mirror this decentralized action in the digital system some kind of *voting should be ubiquitous*, ongoing and everywhere.

4.5. How do you know what rules apply in the art world?

The experiences of the group were that a common domination technique in the art world is the withholding of information. What is right and what is wrong to do is seldom outspoken. In principle, according to the norm for artistic freedom, everything is possible and everyone can join the global art community. But in reality, the rules are harsh and few have the privilege to participate. The informal rules governing the fellowship are a tacit knowledge obtained by socializing with other participants in the international art world. Here the group wanted to challenge the norm by using the tool as a clarification of the informal systems, and thus empowering the actors.

One method practiced in radical democratic meeting techniques is to increase the participants' awareness of power structures by observing the conditions for dialogue in the social situation; e.g. who gets the most space and attention, who is ignored, and how domination techniques are used (Hedenstrand 2008; Hemberg 2002). In order to challenge the domination technique of withholding information, and to support reflection, some kind of *visualization of the informal hierarchy* is necessary.

4.6. Design principles

Design principles we can extract from our study of the art world are thus:

- Any one can join
- Decentralized system
- Status counts
- Co-branding

- Discursive forum
- Asynchronous communication
- Voting should be ubiquitous
- Visualization of the informal hierarchy

5. Implementing design principles

Even though the focus in the analysis was on the singularities of the art world, what came out was a set of common principles for an informal discussion. An informal discussion can be seen as a complex “value system” where users give each other encouraging nods, ignore some of the speakers and engage in heated argumentation with others. There are several meeting techniques that emphasize complexity and offer diverse possibilities for debate to encourage different kinds of participation styles. Open space technology is one example where users employ both written comments and informal oral discussions to come up with an agenda (Owen 1997). Here users create the agenda together, and prepare the questions in self-organized groups in an organic but efficient process, before any decisions are taken. There are plenty of examples of digitally mediated self-organized systems that contain a similar functionality. Wikis are, for example, based on the idea of an open ongoing discussion and here many of the aspirations of deliberate democracy are fulfilled (Klemp & Forchimes 2010). Referring to the work of Dryzek (2005) on deliberative democracy Lourenço & Costa (2010) define blogs and Wikis as “discursive forums”, places where peers can develop a common discourse around shared interests. A Wiki is a simple system which enables a group of people to develop a website without knowledge of coding. The basic idea is that anyone in principle can add or edit pages. Anyone can create new Wiki pages by simply creating a new link with the name of the page. The pages are not hierarchical, but the data structure is held together by hyperlinks between pages. Most Wiki types come with an opportunity to discuss the contents of the current page, and a history of the development of the site with the possibility to retrieve earlier versions. This provides an easy way to collaborate around the development of the content. A Wiki fulfills many of our design principals; *any one can join*, it can be a *decentralized system*, it is a *discursive forum* and it enables *asynchronous communication*.

We have therefore started from this basic Wiki functionality and developed certain aspects further. The user has greater control over the pages she develops, and may choose to invite other participants in the development or only as commentators. You can also make parts of the content private or public, or direct it only to specific users.

Ubiquitous voting systems are also present online in form of possibilities for extending communication in different ways; linking, liking, blogging, digging, twittering. Here value systems are created using reputation to validate content rather than using the legitimacy of conventional institutional frameworks. But the algorithms involved are never completely visible or open to change by the users. Our ambition is to reconnect this kind of ubiquitous and ongoing rating directly to the user and thus make the valuation process visible. Therefore, in order to mirror the importance of status in the tool, status needs to be calculated. But it is a delicate matter to decide who in practice would determine the status of various actors in the system. Should the participants' status be determined when they enter the system? Or should the status be decided in an ongoing voting procedure in which participants regularly rate each other? This would probably not attract some participants. The solution is to focus less on the actors and, instead, to count activity. “Status” is thus

measured indirectly through the value others assign to the actors' actions. Here we assume, following gender research on communication on-line (Herring 2008; Kampen & Snijkers 2003; Nakamura 2001; Postmes & Spears 2002; Wright 2005), that users will react differently to other participants depending on the status position they attribute to the actor. People who have acquired a reputation inside and outside the system get more attention and their actions are given a higher score. Of course, this provides no simple answers as to exactly what factors determine how participants treat each other. But it can point towards ongoing discrimination patterns.

Everything the participants do in the system is called *Acts*, and every Act is also a *React* on someone else's Act, as in Fig. 2. The participants' *Status* is measured in these two different ways in the system. Initially it was an attempt to mirror Bourdieu's habitus concept. Here your position (*Status*) is something that can be developed through individual actions (*Acts*), and something others assign to you depending on class, gender and other structuring factors (*Reacts*). Of course this can not measure the complex habitus process, but it creates a nuanced unit that gives an idea of what kind of activity is needed to level up in the system, without going into details.

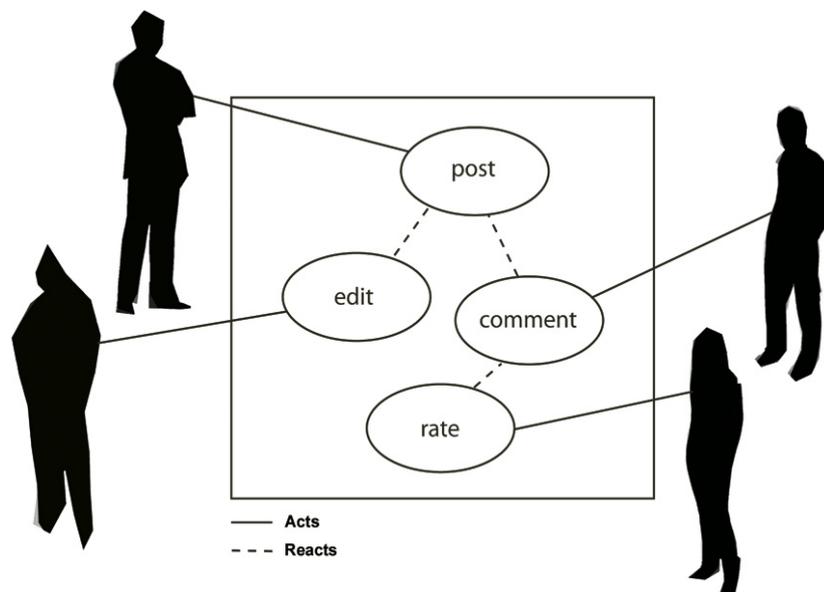


Figure 2. Acts and Reacts on Acts in the system.

Fig. 3 shows how score is distributed in the system, both for Acts and Reacts, and to both actors and objects in the system. The scoring of the objects gives users an opportunity to navigate the content based on popularity.

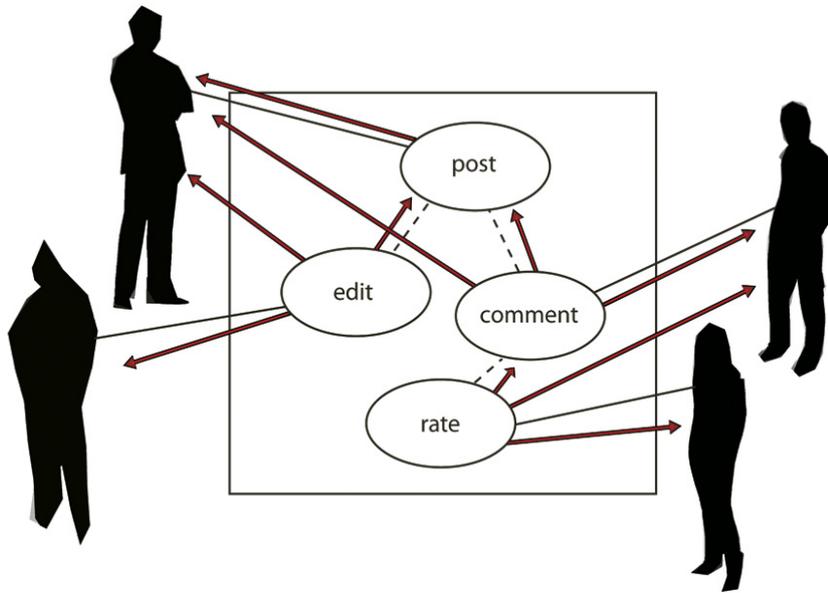


Figure 3. Distribution of score in the system for Acts and Reacts, to both actors and objects.

The valuation does not just take place in one direction in the art world. If one is referring to an artist this not only gives the artist greater value, but also gives oneself value by making the reference. The reference is a way to legitimize one's own position, but it is also a way to legitimize others using the same reference. This mechanism of co-branding also has to be counted. Therefore the score that is given for certain Reacts depends on who is responsible for the React. Fig. 4 illustrates a case where an actor's status level influences the amount of score that is distributed. Here status is a relative value calculated on the user's percentage of the total amount of score in the system, expressed in a value between 0 and the number of users in the system. This implies more or less "inequality" depending on how the system is used, and the greater the number of users the greater the potential inequality.

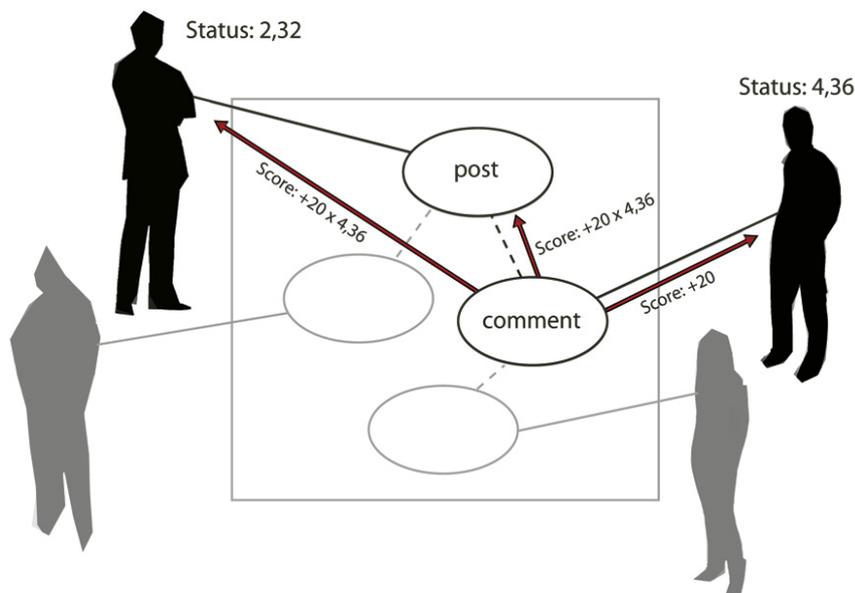


Figure 4. Distribution and calculation of score when a user with the status 4,36 is commenting another user's post.

5.1. Visualization and motivation

Bourdieu describes the art world in military terms as field and movements of positions, where different fractions compete (Bourdieu 2000). Becker describes the art world more as a collaboration, where there are not one but many worlds, in a universe that expands with more participants (Becker 1982). Whatever one's perspective, one can look at a strategy to legitimize/establish the artist as a kind of game. A game can also be used as a method for clarifying the rules and can both be instructive and motivate participation. Thus hierarchy of some kind can, in fact, enhance participation. Most groupware support the setting of different roles, like administrator, moderator, members and guests, but these are not dynamic and do not mirror the complex interplay in real life role settings. In order to involve the actors of the art world in the effort, a system was needed that reflected the important informal and dynamic hierarchies that create meaning in this culture.

The actors' scores can be used to visualize the actors' positions in the system, but they can also give this status a formal meaning, connecting it to certain rights. This could be a way of fostering a certain behavior, like forcing new participants to lurk and listen to previous discussions before starting their own.

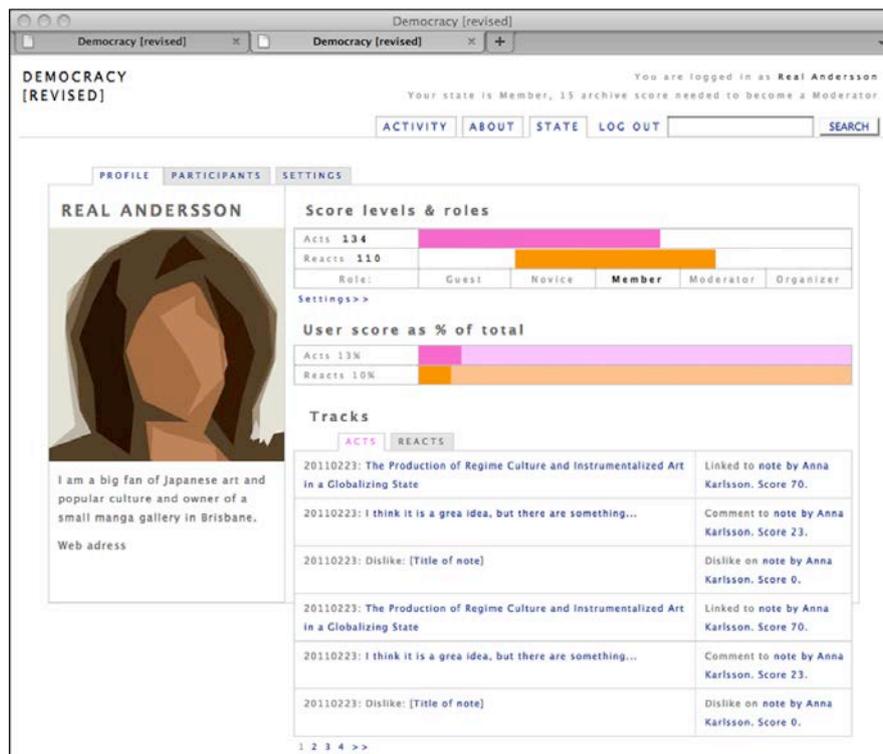


Figure 5. Prototype profile page showing status in relation to total amount of acts and reacts.

		Variables		Roles				
Rights		Score	Status impact	Guest	Novice	Member	Moderator	Organizer
Acts	new post	140	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	edit	10	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	comment	20	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	like	10	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	dislike	0	x0	0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	rate	20	0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	Edit public pages	10	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	Setting Values	0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
Score needed				0	100	200	500	
Reacts	comment	20	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	liked	10	x3	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	disliked	-10	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	linked	70	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	rated 1	-15	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	rated 2	-10	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	rated 3	10	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	rated 4	30	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
	rated 5	45	x2	x0	x0	x0	x0	x0
Score needed				0	0	200	500	
Total score needed				0	100	400	1000	Invitation

Figure 6. Template of thresholds, amounts and total scores of user activity related to roles and rights. Variables that could be changeable by users are in red. Grey areas show what rights are connected to which role in this template.

Users' status in relation to others as well as the valuation of different actions and scores can be made visible and changeable for the users, or groups of users (Fig. 5 and 6). Here the system can be set up for different purposes depending on what type of interaction one wants to promote. In Fig 6. the value of adding a new post is relatively high in order to promote new initiatives. The score given can both have an informative and a symbolic function. If attached to roles, it creates a "game" where users level up and receive extended rights by earning points within the system. In the template example of settings of roles and rights in Fig. 6 "Guest" has the right to read and comment on others posts and to approve them, but cannot create posts or rate others' posts. To become a "Novice" the user has to obtain a score of 100. As a "Member" the user has the right to do everything except edit public pages. To be allowed to edit public pages the user has to level up to "Moderator" which demands a sustainable contribution to the topic. To become an "Organizer" with the right to set the values and thus being able to co-create the rule for the game the user has to be invited by an organizer.

5.2. Design specifications

The system can be summarized in the following design specifications:

A discursive forum: It should support development of common questions, rather than decision-making. Anyone should be able to propose an activity and implement it without anchoring it through voting and discussion. Technically it resembles a Wiki, a discussion forum that supports open source cultural production. Users

have the right to edit their own posts, and to delegate this right. Linking structures the information pointing all actions to earlier actions, to emphasize a common discourse.

- Ubiquitous voting: Voting is done constantly everywhere and in different fashions: Linking, commenting, liking/disliking, and rating. All actions in the system create a score that reflects an opinion.
- Counting activity: A person's reputation should be measured through her and others' actions. Everyone's different reputation should be taken into account when judging action. The scores users give depend on their total score, i.e. their status level. The users' total score depends on their own activity and the score other gives the users' activity. User and posts percentage of all scores are dynamic and depend on the total distribution of score within the system.
- Visualized status: Transparency and visualization of how score is gained clarifies user strategies, system rules, roles and rights.
- Motivating game: Gaining visual reputation should be challenging in order to motivate and encourage participation. Hierarchy can be used as a way of communicating the system and motivating participation.

5.3. Wiki + Status + Visualization = Reflexive technology

A collaborative Wiki-like interface, where anyone can create a page linked to previous pages and develop this through the collective, reflects the institutional concept of art where anyone can become an artist as long as she follow the rules created in the dynamic negotiation in the network and thus contributes to the common discourse. A status meter reflects the importance of status in the art world, where participants are scored both by one's initiative and the value others put on this work. Score is gained for many different activities: Linking, commenting, liking/disliking, and rating. Just as in the art world co-branding is an important part of the scoring system, and one's own value is changed indirectly if those referred to change their value. Unlike the art world, where unclear rules makes the system difficult to maneuver, our system creates a visualization of the individual strategy in relation to others as a way of showing alternative routes. The visualization of the score level also creates a kind of gaming experience that clarifies the strategy game in the art world, and can serve as a way to motivate participation in the short run.

The tool is a fully functionally prototype in Drupal that has been evaluated in a small group of users and will be tested further during 2012. The functionality is discussed in detail in two previous conference papers (Hansson, Karlström, Larsson, & Verhagen 2011; Hansson, Verhagen, Karlström, & Larsson 2011).

6. Discussion

In a global perspective, one can say that democracy is about the dissemination of a democratic culture, an idea of equality expressed in reflective acts. How can our tool support a global democratic reflexivity? And how is it possible to develop this further?

In this groupware we have developed what we would like to call a micro-democratic model with the ambition of mirroring Fraser's concept of democracy. According to Fraser (2005) a global democratic justice has three dimensions; The first dimension is distribution (1) of equal rights, from legal rights to economic opportunities. The second is recognition (2), that all different kinds of identities and singularities are culturally recognized. The third dimension deals with representation (3), that the people who will be affected by the decision are also represented in the democratic process.

Our tool visualizes these aspects on a conceptual level;

- 1) Distribution of individuals activities is visualized in Acts, showing who is actually using the possibility to act, and who are able to articulate themselves in suggestions and question.
- 2) Recognition is visualized in Reacts, that show whose questions and suggestions get support and acknowledgment.
- 3) Representation is visualized in Status, showing who is most influential and active. Our system can, by measuring the "status" show which actors have contributed most to the community of interests, and the stakeholders whose participation is perceived as important by others. This will create, if not a fair representation, at least a clear picture of who is counted as most "representative" in the community.

A computer program can of course not solve democratic conflicts in interest-based associations, but by showing how individual actions reproduce and alter the structural patterns, use of the system serves as a basis for discussion and as a support for a reflective democratic culture.

The idea of the system is to support discursive democratic processes that can develop various social issues within communities of interest. But it could also be interesting to see how the system can support a traditional representative decision-making process. In most decisions in the representative democratic system, policy makers and officials are in dialogue with citizens about various details of the process. One way to create civic dialogue is through the use of digital discussion forums where various arguments on an issue can be discussed directly with the people concerned. The problem with these forums is the question of representation (Macintosh et al. 2009). It is generally people who already have great influence in society who dominate these digital boards. A tool that keeps track of who is involved and whose positions influence the most, can be a tool to catch sight of how much value this kind of discussion can be given. This does not mean that the participants' opinions are recorded directly, but that one keeps track of some meta-data such as gender, age, education level, etc., depending on the situation, and for safety reasons separates the data from the actual discussion.

Another development of this tool is instead of seeing this from a group perspective or from a government perspective, seeing it from an individual perspective. The individual is part of a wide range of interests and it may be interesting to see how these can be managed and made to work together from the perspective of the individual's life-world. It may therefore be interesting to see how reputation systems are used in other areas. Projects such as Klout give users an opportunity to transform their social capital in different networks to an economic capital in the form of various free products. Here an individual's personal brand is simply used for product placement, and influential individuals are given different free product offers. Social networks like Facebook supports the user with a variety of opportunities to discuss and "vote" on various issues. Micro blog services like Twitter allow users to

see how their own statements are spreading further through their network. It is often personal interests and a few enthusiasts, supported by fans, who run various issues. By looking at issues and interests as individual driven and identity-based, rather than collectively driven and interest-based, one can develop the system further.

7. Conclusion

In the field of e-democracy the research on technological development is primarily on the development of e-government, despite the rapid growth of social networks that indicates that the political discussion takes place elsewhere than at governmental web sites (Dahlberg 2011). This project focuses on the democratic processes in the creative culture online in globally spread commons. We have started from theories about how a particular community of interest is maintained, to find principles on how demos built on interest can be effectively enforced. These principles have then guided the development of a groupware designed to strengthen democratic processes in self-interest groups. The result is a Wiki-like prototype of a groupware where the participants' reputation is measured and transformed through a dynamic voting process. The participants' scores are created by their own activities but also by others' reactions: links, likes / dislike, rating, commenting. This creates a system where both user activity and user reputation create the user's score level. Importance is thus given not only to users' actions but users' informal status, here we assume that users will give scores not only based on the actual activity but also based on the status they attribute to the actor (that we assume depends on the level of closeness as well as on intersected factors like gender, class, age and ethnicity). The participant advances in the system by gathering points and can, based on the score level, be given different possibilities to influence the rules. Hierarchy can thus be used as a means to foster behavior and communicate the functionality of the interface, but also to create stability and to motivate people with high scores to continue to participate.

The prototype was tested in a small group of users and is now being tested in our internal team. During the summer of 2012 it will be evaluated in conjunction with civic dialogues in a research project on planning processes.

The system will be further developed towards two different uses:

- 1) A collaborative tool for interest based networks. This tool can serve as a way to draw attention to individual initiative by visualizing how reputation is created in the system by the user and in collaboration with other users. By using the score as a way to dynamically create roles and provide rights, informal roles in the group are visualized and formalized and thus become easier to understand and influence.
- 2) A research tool for empirically analyzing the significance of representation and recognition, transparency and motivation in in-group processes.

8. Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Karl David Larsson, Petter Karlström & Torsten Jurell for help in the development of the design guidelines, Aron Larsson & Ernest Rwandalla for assistance in the system design and Love Ekenberg, Åsa Andersson and the anonymous reviewers for valuable comments.

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Performing Structure

Fine Art as a Prototype for Participation

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Abstract

The art project *Performing Structure* (www.performingstructure.se) deals with the performance of organizational systems like democracy in a place structured by globalization through migration and information. An art exhibition in the public space is employed as a way to better understand the conditions for democratic participation. In this work-in-progress, artists work in relation to research regarding e-democracy using the concept of art as a method to explore the context.



Image 1. Antigone (2011) Johanna Gustafsson Fürst & Kista Theatre

1. INTRODUCTION

In a recent overview of the research on e-participation, Macintosh, Coleman and Schneeberger [1] show that a more informed discussion regarding the importance of form and structure in democracy is needed in the technological development in the field. As, e.g., Sæbø, Rose, and Skiftenesflak [2] point out; current research on e-participation lacks innovation in the sense that most software is adaptations of existing technologies. Furthermore, the Internet is treated as a distinct artifact and technological solutions are mostly taken for granted. These approaches have seldom been successful regarding broad and representative citizen involvement, and in particular not in more socially complex areas. Moreover, Dahlberg [3] notes that a belief in the ability of technology to shape a neutral place for deliberative discussions is omnipresent in the discourse on Internet and democracy.

We are skeptical against a technology strongly influenced by a liberal notion of democracy as an egalitarian sphere for reasoning, rather than, e.g., a Foucauldian notion of hegemonic discourse shaped by power relations. The question then arises whether there are other complementary approaches to the field. Our approach is more along the line with Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons[4] suggesting that socially embedded research could give way to more robust forms of knowledge production. Therefore, we have recently started an art and research project exploring how an unconditional conversation about the common and socially shared space can take place in practice. In contrast to a technology driven approach, the argument is that art projects can be used as forms for both investigating and creating multimodal mediated participation. Furthermore, thematic art projects can be used as a way of prototyping¹ for participatory democracy. Artists' actions, installations and role-playing create a direct confrontation and interaction with a specific place and its inhabitants to explore the dynamic relationships that constitute its context. The notion of art creates a certain focus and expectation of seeing something beyond the

¹ It should be noted that prototyping, in this context, do not primarily refer to the evaluation of design ideas or as a way of communicating ideas to an audience. Rather, it denotes a method for investigating new design ideas and to understand the existing user experience and environment.

everyday perception. We would like to see art as what Metzger[5] calls a “democratic technology” – an informal context that provides an unconditional opportunity to try different positions and opinions.

Since the participatory turn in the 1960’s, art that more directly includes the audience in the performance or the process has been thoroughly investigated[6-7]. Today, participation as an aesthetic component is common in the nomadic context of contemporary art. However, we think that too often, the critical potential in participatory art is reduced to symbolic gestures. We want to overcome this by situating a participatory art project in a local context and connect it with research on e-democracy, and thereby create a possibility for the art project to inform the research and vice versa. The conceptual starting point for *Performing Structure* is the recognition of the need to examine the norms and beliefs forming the basis of the structures and communication patterns that current technologies co-create. We are interested in the “doing” of democracy within science, and what the bases for democracy looks like. The focus is on the daily conversations in small and large groups and the mechanisms that shape these conversations.

2. THE CONCEPTS OF ART AS TECHNIQUES

In participatory design, a multitude of art genres are used as a way of involving users in the process, such as probes, scenarios and role-playing. Here we won’t emphasize any particular artistic genre; instead we use different concepts of art as a way of exploring the conditions for a participatory democracy grounded in a particular context. Our techniques for exploring different perspectives on e-democracy include:

1. Subjectivity – to compare the site with other global nodes through artists’ personal experiences
2. Conflict – to emphasize diversity and conflict rather than consensus
3. Pain – to use the artwork as a memory-work, a technique for understanding underlying conflicts and detecting norms and behaviors

2.1 A subjective comparison between Kista-Rinkeby and other global nodes in processes of restructuring

The notion of subjectivity is strong in the avant-garde concept of art. We can reach a contextual understanding beyond statistic generalizations by departing from the individual artist's subjective understanding of a certain situation. We situate the art project at Kista-Rinkeby, which is the home location for the e-democracy researchers. This is one of Stockholm's more expansive suburbs, and a central location for global companies primarily in the information industry, and both Stockholm University and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm have chosen to place parts of their operations here. It is also home for programs, such as the government-funded Spider (The Swedish Program for ICT in Developing Regions) which, among other things "exports" e-democracy to developing countries. Kista-Rinkeby is characterized by extreme local segregation, and those living there are not generally the same ones working there. The unemployment rate among the local residents is high as well as the proportion of immigrants. The place illustrates the new divisions created by globalization, where diverse socio-economic worlds become wrapped up in each other and where the state's ability to balance differences has declined. Here, technology has not decreased but increased disparities as the importance of social and cultural capital has increased in the networked economy in general. The latter is not unique to Kista-Rinkeby and in order to compare the site with other global nodes through artists' personal experiences, we invite artist from different peripheral nodes heavily restructured by the global system. One participating group is The Khoj International Artists' Association in Delhi, an arts organization where artists work in dialogue with the space at the intersection between art, society and urban development. The Moldavian artist Stefan Rusu uses art as a way to talk about social and political phenomena. He is also the leader of KSAK Center for Contemporary Art in Chisinau, Moldova, and has developed art projects throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia, focusing on processes and changes in post-socialist societies. The Lithuanian artists Nomeda & Gedimina Urbonas also explore post-Soviet notions of changing

national identity, and the conflicts and contradictions caused by the new economic and political conditions. They started JUTEMPUS interdisciplinary program for art in Vilnius, and VOICE, an online publication on media culture. In Kista-Rinkeby these artists will work in close relation to local Swedish artists and local organizations.

2.2 Conflict and diversity as a tool

Unsurprisingly, and as various social media has demonstrated, communication technology, is not necessarily alienating. It can instead support previously fragmented groups to keep together and provide the means for new communities with a shared interest to form and interact. Technically, it seems to be easier to lump together similarities rather than differences, and to design services that offer us new products and friends based on our previous choices. The technology thus niches us, shatters us, and makes the common areas of understanding lesser and easier to avoid. It is difficult to get along with “the other”. But in order to develop an understanding of the common it is not enough to talk only to people who think and act like us. A technique that is not based on combining equals but different varieties appears here as a discursive democratic utopia. In the choice of artists, we have therefore tried to see beyond our own aesthetic practices while creating a heterogeneous group of artists. By bringing together artists with different experiences and modes of expression, we are promoting a situation of conflict where the individual artists' subject positions are questioned.

Conflict is also a recurrent theme in art, where the individual artist is supposed to be in conflict with the collective system. An avant-garde artist breaks with the norms and differentiates himself from ordinary men and previous art. Standard in these settings is that an artist's role is created through a differentiation process, where an outsider is opposed to the norm; Avant-garde in contrast to the conventional; painting in contrast to performance, and so on. We take another direction in this project and depart from our different perspectives; deconstructing the norms that create a difference while looking for a common denominator. To avoid locking into just one perspective, ten invited artists and artists groups

approach the subject from a multitude of angles such as community art, urban installation art and activist art. The artists are using locative and interactive media, as well as more traditional artistic techniques. The particular art genre is not important here; a common denominator is that the artists work with situation-specific emancipatory art projects that in various ways relate to the physical and mediated public sphere. Therefore, we do not emphasize a particular artistic method, but rather *the actual meeting* between the artists and the procedures for dealing with differences. Using the thematic exhibition as a framework, different artistic perspectives create a triangulation of methods where a more diverse and complex picture of the situation can emerge.

2.3 The collaborative development of the exhibition as a memory-work

Through the joint development of a theme, the group exhibition works as a special form of knowledge building. This has similarities with Frigga Haug and others' method of *memory-work*[8] , i.e., a qualitative method that uses the memories of a group of researchers to investigate norms and social structures. This use of personal experience as a tool for academic analysis is based on Husserl's systematic attempt to examine the subjective unconscious where he argues that we can reach a general understanding of a phenomenon by understanding the individual's experiences [9]. The idea behind the memory-work method is that memories often derive from situations where we have experienced a taboo or a cultural constraint that caused a conflict. But to get to the underlying experience that caused the memory, one must see through cultural norms and behavioral patterns. The memory-work method is specifically intended to reach to the underlying experience. To achieve this, one begins by describing the individual's own conscious memories. The collective analysis of each memory is then intended to identify the underlying conflicts and to detect the cultural norms and behaviors involved, i.e., the very reason for why the memory has become a memory.

In the project, we consider the similarities between the memory work approach and the thematic group exhibition and develop our own method of collective

knowledge production. Within the framework of the arts organization *Association for Temporary Art [a: t]* Åsa Andersson Broms , Nils Claesson and Karin Hansson previously carried out a series of thematic art projects and exhibitions related to the information society and the changing conditions for democracy: *Best before - on the Information Society*, Tensta Konsthall (1999), *The Art of Organizing*, Gallery Enkehuset (2000), *Money - a commentary on the new economy and Public Opinion* at the Kulturhuset in Stockholm (2001, 2002). Central for the work is the collaboration between the artists and the ambition to create something beyond the multiplication of the single parts. This way of working with a thematic art exhibition has many similarities with the qualitative research method of memory-work. The artist most often departs from his or her subjective experience of the chosen theme and focuses on the elements that he/she thinks are interesting. What is interesting most often means some form of unresolved conflict that chafe at the individual or societal level. The motivation for making art is to a great extent about the need to express a subjective experience/interest on a structural level where others can read it. The collective process in a group exhibition, where artists share their ideas and reflections with each other, works at its best as a collective memory-work where the discussion of ideas creates an understanding of underlying conflicts and detects the inclusion of norms and behaviors; the very reason that the art has become an art work.

The planed exhibition is developed in the group of artist trough a collective memory-work.

3. ARTISTS AND ART PROJECTS IN PROCESS

Most important in the project is the invited artists personal engagement in the theme and interest in a joint development of the underlying ideas. To reach beyond symbolic gestures of community the privileges of the artist as well as researcher are examined and questioned.

To mention some of the ongoing and planed art works within the project: A project that already takes place in the Kista-Rinkeby area is Thomas Liljenbergs' *Kista Art City*, where a joint art project creates a starting point for a wider discussion

about community participation and notions of belonging among the citizens of Kista. Shiva Anoushirvani's work takes place at the intersection between art, activism and performance. As part of the artist group RAR: Rapid Art Response she develops the project *Dear Citizen* in collaboration with Husby Arthall. Here acts of democracy are taught through performance and role-playing.

One aspect of the theme is how technology can (or cannot) demonstrate and change social structures, and thus operate in an emancipatory direction and to broaden democratic participation. The artist Johanna Gustafsson Fürst, together with Kista Theatre explores communication technology applications related to a specific location. In the project *I'm Your Body* they use mobile GPS technology to create a parallel public place within Kista-Rinkeby.

Mass-distributed collaborative processes such as crowd-sourcing and open source are also an aspect of the technology that is interesting from a democratic participatory perspective. This is the field of Karin Hansson's work, *Actory*, a collaborative groupware based on the sociology of the art world, developed together with students at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and researchers at Stockholm University.



Image 2. Reconciliation (2011) Shiva Anoushirvani



Image 3. Mapping Falun (2008) Åsa Andersson Broms

4. ART AS PROTOTYPES FOR PARTICIPATION

To conclude, this project contributes to the discussion about artistic research by showing how situation-specific art can be viewed as a qualitative method for highlighting and exploring discursive practices. Through a triangulation of different artistic perspectives the themed and collectively generated art exhibition creates a diverse and complex picture of notions such as participation and democracy. The artistic work is an iterative process where concrete images, scenarios and situations create a direct communication with the site. We want to see the project as a construction of prototypes for alternative societies as well as a laboratory for participation. Following a rich tradition of participatory art, we emphasize the artists' capacity to listen, interact and respond. Art is not something that comes in from above or outside. Instead it should be grounded in the activities at the site, creating meaning beyond the context of contemporary art.

An important practical input into the project, is achieved through the activities undertaken by local organizations such as Kista Residential College for Adult Education, Husby Association for Arts & Crafts, Husby Yard and Rinkeby People's House. The artists within the project are working in direct relation to existing activities. During the spring and summer of 2012, a number of art projects will be carried out in the public and semi-public space in Kista-Rinkeby.

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