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Institutionalization of a general electronic democracy through electronic democratic parties – a general concept with focus on Germany

Abstract

Not only the public services are able to ensure the effective and efficient use of e-democracy tools. This contribution points out how a party must be structured to function as a neutral service provider for the citizen to set the results of electronic decision-making processes generally binding. The party provides only the methodology and the technology of decision making. Contents are defined exclusively from the citizens. These contents and voting results are implemented obligatorily in the parliament by the delegates of the party. The electronic democracy contributes, in order to supplement the representative democracy, scalable around direct democratic elements. The citizens can determine all 4 or 5 years with the national elections, how much each political decision has to be affected directly by e-democracy tools. Such an approach is subject to other requirements than a governmental offered service.

1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation

There are only two approaches discussed in general when it comes to the point of the introduction for electronic democratic concepts. The first approach deals with the idea how the state itself can act as provider for electronic democratic mechanisms. The second one deals with the aspect of organizational-internal processes or tasks (of companies, associations, parties, ...) and how those processes can be supported or mapped via electronic democratic methods. Less attention has been paid on the aspect what potentials and possibilities can be provided by the political parties themselves to establish electronic democratic concepts to support the interaction of state and citizen in general.

Political parties within a representative democracy like Germany have the feasibility to reach and claim governance through the participation at periodic national elections. This governance can be used to establish the results of their internal decision finding processes for all citizens within the state through establishing equivalent laws. Parties therefore can establish a connection between the state and the citizen which is permanent and does not only find (like it is indeed nowadays) its expression through periodic votes and participation at national elections.

At this point, the function of a party as a binding link can be used to establish and institutionalize electronic democratic methods which are not state-run but which results are however mandatory for the general public. The party functions as a service provider for the citizen and provides Online-Decision-Processes and the implementation of the results of those processes through their delegates in the parliament.

This paper deals with the structural and organizational requirements for a party, to support electronic voting for decision-making and decision-finding with issue-related neutrality towards the citizen and conformity to the ruling law. Also, the bindingness of those decisions for the state must be ensured.

1.2. Understanding of party and democracy

At first, the definitions of the idea of party and a process-oriented democracy understanding, on which this paper is based on, will be discussed.

Beyme defines the four most important functions of a party as follows ([1], S. 360-361). Those functions are general and not related to the constitution:

- Intention finding
- Articulation and aggregation of societal interests
- Mobilization and socialization of the citizens
- Recruiting of the elite and formation of the government.

The exact definition of the concept "party" is subject to the constitution of a state where the party will be established ([2], S. 27). Within the federal republic of Germany, parties are defined as a constitutional element for the political articulation of the citizens through the so called Grundgesetz (the German basic constitutional law).
paragraph 21. Further regulation and can be provided through federal law like the Parteienengesetz (the party laws), the BGB (citizen and economic laws) the Wahlgesetz (voting law) or the Steuergesetz (tax laws) or the party-internal ordinance.

The law for political parties defines the tasks and requirements for a party: the party should support the formation of the political ambitions and volition of the citizens within all areas of the public life by supporting and influencing the configuration of the public opinion through stimulation and deepening of the political education. Furthermore, the parties should cultivate the active participation of citizens in political life, form citizens to take over important public liability, submit themselves to the goal of participation within the confederacy, Bundesländer (federal states of Germany) and township through providing manpower, taking influence on the development of parliament and government, placing their internal decision within the general political decision-making process and to establish a lively connection and relation between the people and their government body. The inner structure of a German party must be democratic.

On the other hand, the party is subject to non-functional requirements like number of members, durability or seriousness. Those aspects are not to be seen when looking with an abstract manner at the internal processes. From the view of the party, those factors are external influences on the instantiation of a party as the process owner.

An important element of democracy is the political decision-making processes. They provide the deformation and aggregation of individual and collective needs, interests and opinions [3, Rz. 25]. Pre-requisites are the processes of identification and articulation of societal conflicts which will become part and issue of the process of political decision-making. Party should focus on those processes and adopt these. They should provide electronic services and systems to identify and support those processes. The existence of a majority of legitimated administration members is no necessary pre-requisite for a democracy but still a possibility for a change to the exercise of power within those minorities are an important criteria (see [3, Rz. 19]).

2. Boundaries of electronic participation

Kubicek et al. identify within the context of electronic democracy six major domains where technical attributes and attributes as regards contents of a media for user and provider should fit the technical and socio-cultural requirements [4]. If those requirements are not met, the wide use of this particular media is not possible or predictable. Those domains are technics, law, organization, culture and politics. In the following paragraph we consider only problems which cover the borders of the application of electronic democratic methods where a participational decision-process can provide significant results. We focus on:

- the relation between state (service provider) and citizen (participant)
- the inner relations between party (service provider) and party member (service user) and
- the outer relation between party (service provider) and non-party members (participants).

Participation in this particular case is used with the following meaning. Participation means that external persons or groups are participating at decisions which are subject to the competency area of a certain position or institution. Forms of participation are information, support, hearings, veto or codetermination. Though the position keeper can not be released from his responsibility ([5], S. 158).

2.1. Boundaries of state-run services

Normally, political decisions, where the citizens can participate due to actions taken by the state will not be numerous, they will only cover individual cases. From the view of the citizen, this might be a bit disturbing because the votes are on heavily pre-selected choices and opinions given by the government body to choose from. The power of identifying the issues in a democratic process is as important as the power to select an issue for voting, choose a number of alternatives or to take a final decision. This method makes for avoiding unpopular or irrelevant decision with predetermined results for kind of pseudo-participation. But the state cannot redirect this power to the people nor is he obliged to by the law. He must guarantee that the delegation of decisions to the people in all phases is at least equal to a conventional approach.

The choice of a selection of use cases for electronic participation is also limited by the so called Gleichstellungsgrundsatz (equality rule, which means equal situations may not be treated unequal and unequal situations may not be treated equal.) A solution which only provides electronic support would be against this law as long as electronic access to information for everybody is no general standard. This leads to a highly ineffective and expensive parallel use of two systems of conventional and electronic design. The legitimation of a democratic decision is not mainly driven by the mere existence of a majority but more by the quality and the intensity of the process leading to that particular decision which must ensure that all participants could exchange their opinions and arguments in an appropriate manner. However, the quality of an electronic and a conventional process will always remain different. To keep to the equality rule as mentioned above, the conventional process may never be less competitive than the electronic process. This leads to a real problem. The constant improvement of state-run
electronic participation works against the equality law which leads to a diminution of the legality of those electronic processes.

2.2. Boundaries of inter-organizational electronic democracy

The decision-making process within a party has got several approaches for electronic support. Methods of participation can be mapped to the virtual reality by concrete methods. Elements of the party's board which use those methods can be virtualized. Furthermore, there have been approaches which try to virtualize complete organizational units with the help of virtual boards and methods.

Organs or key elements of a party are especially the General Meeting, the executive board or the arbitration-board. In Germany, there haven been some examples of virtual General Meetings (see [6]). In the forefront of a real party day within a Landesverband of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU Baden-Württemberg) of Germany there were discussions about particular issues for this meeting done in the virtual member net. Party members could log on to a special forum within the internet and could contribute and discuss about some decisions which had to be taken in real life. Those decisions were collected and submitted to the real life party day. Another example is the party day of a part of the Bündnis 90 / die Grünen (the Green second-party-in-power in Germany) which was held from the 24.11.2000 until the 03.12.2000. While most objectives which cover a real General Meeting by the law have been adhered to, there was still the need to attest those decisions taken by the virtual community in real life with a real delegate meeting.

Like mentioned above, parties are subject to the German party law. According to this law and the German Bundeswahlgesetz (federal voting law) the board of a party which means its general secretary (also its federal candidates and changes within their ordinance) can only be voted in real life party days. There is a lot of organizational freedom within this process but it must be ensured that every member can properly join the decision-finding process. An exclusive electronic General Meeting would derogate the offline-Members [7]. There have recently been examples where associations could work around those constraints. Every member of the association therefore must sign a letter of declaration saying that he has access to the internet and send this letter to the local law office (Amtsgericht) where the association is registered (see [8]). All German parties are subject to the German association law although they do not have to be registered associations.

There have been approaches to instantiate district groups (so called Gebietsverbände) of a party as a virtual instance. Several German parties like have established those groups, e.g. the German FDP (Free democratic party) (FDP LV NET, http://www.fdp-lv-net.de), the SPD (Social democratic party) (VVD, http://www.vvd.de) and the PDS (Party of democratic socialism) (PDS LV 17, http://www.pds-lv17.de). According to the German party law, paragraph 7, those virtual district groups must exist in a clear shaped region for every member to properly adopt the decision-process. However, the virtual internet is not a clear region. You cannot guarantee the access so the virtual groups do not have the same rights as the conventional district groups (see [9]). So the competencies of those groups within the political process are relatively low within the parties. The main issue working in the virtual groups is to collect knowledge and best-practices about virtual meetings to improve regional cooperation.

2.3. Problems of conventional parties as providers for citizen participation

Parties have made up several concepts to open for non-members and integrating them [10]:

- Free Collaboration: Non-members get the rights to gather information and to take place in discussion and participation of political work. Positions or voting right within the party can not be reached.
- Guest membership: Non-member without internal voting-rights can work in commissions, project group or work groups.
- Campaign membership: The membership is limited by the amount of time to the duration of a particular and special activity which makes it possible for lateral entries to prove their skills.
- Virtual membership: This covers the membership in virtual party groups which do not cover an party-internal rights.
- Communities of expertise: Informal, by the party initialized networks which should be used to get to know the experiences of the citizens.

The main focus of these concepts is to identify non-members which can and should become members and on the other hand to include the knowledge of non-members for the party's own interests. The focus is not to let non-members define the heading of the internal politics. Parties must have internal party programs which cover their aims and values. Those aims are implemented by persons, e.g. special people are elected in order to claim and represent those aims internally and externally.

The idea of integrating non-members not only to inform them about the own values and politics but to achieve direct, binding and result-oriented decision-processes leads to a conflict between the conventional and person-related decision-structures. Participants which are not only interested in the goals as regards content of the party but only in the binding of their interactions would

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lead the party to follow a more operational politics which can be against the party program or the attitude of the party's leaders. This conflict can also come up between the party's board and the party's member basis when conventional indirect democratic decision-processes are mixed with direct-democratic and electronic-supported decision-making techniques.

3. Electronic democratic parties

This section describes a concept (within the German constitution) for a party, which can act conflict-free and efficient when integrating and using electronic methods for party-related politics design. Party using this concept should be able to include the interests and opinions of all citizens permanent and effective in the political decision-making process, even when the results differ very much from those of the own members without weakening the own party organization.

3.1. Redesign of the decision-making and building process

A basic factor is the differentiation between the operational politics and the party decisions which should only be subject to members of the party. This includes particulars and the votes about the association ordinance and program. The operational politics is meant to be the implementation and interpretation of the party program. There has to be an isolation of decision-making and building processes through the operational politics formation and the particular votes. A candidate should not be voted for because of this political attitude, this should be true for all positions.

The operational political decision-making processes can be run under support of electronic tools. The party should provide electronic measures for identification, articulation, deformation and aggregation of political conflicts and opinions. The user scope of those services should not only be limited to the party members. Because this decision-process is decoupled from the particulars and the administration processes, which are important and essential to the party organization, even non-members can participate in the decision-making process (see figure 1).

Of course, a pre-registration of non-members may be useful to decrease the number of participating non-members. It is useful to accept only non-members who are subject to the decision which will take place and who have the general right to vote. Processes which only result in results and issues for a particular area will just be available for registered non-members and members in those areas. This is analogue implemented in the commune and at federal level. Users registered for such services provided by the party are so-called party-users (see [9][11, Abs. 3.1][12]).

Particulars and personal positions and the articles of association do not have the necessity to be supported by electronic measures to gain time advantages or attract greater masses of people. Even an existing delegate system is no barrier because you can still do the politics through the party-users directly. The party itself can have a very lean organization though. Members are primary used to establish and maintain the electronic services for the party-users. Those services include, in the very sense of a political controlling, the planning, selection, introduction and operation of the necessary socio-technical system and the process engineering related control of the execution of the decision-making processes. Members are not needed to form a large basis of persons for the party to represent certain society circles good enough to legitimize the decision-making processes.

The party program should be prepared for the manifoldness of all parties concerned. There should be no long-term, issue-related or ideological guidelines through the party itself to protect the contemporary relation between events and their discussion. Only methodical conditions should be defined which operationalize and concretize the political issues in an electronic matter. Not certain measures like “We Do A” or “We Do B” for societal problems or problems X or Y should be tracked in the party platform or program. It has to be defined, how a measure against a problem can be found and selected. This by itself covers the identification of a problem scope. The description of attributes for concrete problem-solving strategies will be replaced with the attributes of an
abstract problem-solving strategy. This strategy must cover the tasks identification, articulation, deformation and aggregation of political conflicts and opinions. The party platform therefore describes the characteristics of their own operationalization.

The party-users should not only contain the possibility to vote and choose from predefined measures for actual societal problems. It should furthermore contain the possibility for party-users to bring in their own proposals to the decision-processes. This will be subject to the used technical systems. The compliance to state-of-the-art security issues is mandatory. The discussion module will hardly reach a general consensus of functionality, usability, sympathetic user-compilation and quality as regards content. We expect existing communities to discuss in their own closed communities and use the party-related forum only when a ballot will occur where using in mandatory. This would provide a useful workload for the party infrastructure.

### 3.2. Institutionalization of electronic participation

The results of the votes by the party-internal system can be brought to the decision-process in the parliament by the probably existing delegates. If ballots about certain proposals occur, the delegates vote in an approximated mapping like the party-user. If 40 percent of all users voted for the proposal and 60 against, 4 out of 10 delegates are going to vote for and 6 against parliament. This technique projects the party-users opinion into the parliament. When reaching parliamentary-party power, the party can itself bring proposals into the parliament. Because of this direct democratic influence on the whole system, we must define a good criteria for the right to participate. Therefore we adopt the idea of a general suffrage. A party designed in such a manner can introduce direct-democratic elements into the parliament without having to change the constitution [13].

The party-members provide the electronic infrastructure for the process mapping and provide the candidates for the national elections. The party-users provide the political heading as regards content, the design of proposals and the results of those proposals. The delegates map those results and take the political responsibility. The voters can weight the work of those delegates through their participation in the national federal elections (see figure 2).

Members do not have to be party-user. In their characteristic as a member they do not have (in the ideal case) influence on the political heading of the party and cannot influence the decision-making process to their personal favor. A personalization of politics is still possible by the party-users. This person cannot be a member of the party. It must be an external representative which can be designated by interest groups themselves. The candidates for the delegate position must be done by the party-members for two reasons. The first reason is a legal reason. The second is for the reason of party-users. Politically motivated party-users would try to motivate like-minded people for delegates. But the candidates should only support a methodology and not their own programmatic.

**Figure 2: Institutionalization of electronic participation services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation of contents</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Acting</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of socio-technical systems</td>
<td>National elections</td>
<td>Advising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Elective citizens</td>
<td>Human representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time horizon</td>
<td>Periodical prospective</td>
<td>Permanent realtime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>Institutionalization</td>
<td>Meta policy, methodology</td>
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The German constitutional law has a special right for delegates in the German parliament, the so called Gewissensfreiheit (freedom of conscience). This freedom provides each delegate the insurance that he can vote whatever he wants to, his party cannot force him to vote against his conscience. This freedom will be kept because as all other parties see their results only as a recommendation to vote. The border will be broken when delegates are constrained to vote in the favor of their party or have to suffer from backlash (see [14, Rz. 37]). The authors expect delegates to think before candidateship if they want to support a social-democratic, liberal, Christian-democratic, ecological or direct-democratic politics program so that there will be no conflict being member of such a politics party. Indemnity according to the constitution is ensured. It cannot be more simplified to keep their pre-voting promises.

Delegates are representatives for the whole people. They should not only represent the opinions of a single party or interest group but the opinions of the whole people. In real life, it is impossible for a delegate to support a proposal without references of experts toward certain knowledge areas. It is impossible to become an expert in each knowledge area which could be covered in the parliament. It is impossible to judge the quality, issues and facts about all the issues which are needed to be autonomic in their own decisions from the opinions of other people. It is necessary and legitimate that fraction members as lobbyists or the own party support the delegate in front of the ballots. The only question is if the
support still makes a diligent decision possible. The information sources should be properly weighted and not focused on single viewpoints and all stakeholders should be properly taken into account. Delegates must carefully judge the quality of these external services. Electronic democratic parties can themselves articulate recommendations which have been created in a defined and comprehensible manner by the party-users. Each citizen has the possibility to work with equal rights like party-users for their own interest group or lobbies for his own interests.

3.3. Definition

Electronic democratic parties are political associations in the very sense of the paragraph 21 of the German constitution and socio-technical systems for an integrated and sustainable identification, articulation, deformation, aggregation and adjustment of individual and collective needs, interests and opinions in order to create the best possible intensity in the relation between the citizen and the government.

This definition is oriented at the necessity to observe and consider parties in the context of a concrete constitution.

Important elements of a democracy are the processes of the political decision-making. They form a deformation and aggregation of individual and collective needs, interests and opinions (see [3, Rz. 25]). An important prerequisite are processes for the identification and articulation of societal conflicts which can be subject to the political decision-making process. The parties should focus on those processes and provide suitable electronic services and systems.

Socio-technical systems are organized mergers of persons to manage extensive tasks through division of labor and the use of technical systems, e.g. IT-Technology (see [15], S. 119). The technical and social structures depend on each other, influence each other heavily and form an integrated whole towards the environment [16].

Their application should be holistic. That means, every of the above processes and every partial-process must be electronically workable. But no exclusiveness is needed. Conventional methods could be applied.

The sustained yield of those socio-technical systems promises a bindingness of the process results. The party has got or competes for the possibility to implement the results according to their destination. This bindingness is not assigned to the supporting methods to avoid legitimation conflicts between the results. This leads to a requirement concerning freedom of deformation or at least minimization of deformation. Aggregation of opinions and interests always leads to a deformed image of those interests on a basis of all participants. It is consequent in order to keep to direct-democratic ideals if you want to take into account all the individual results and to avoid the process of equalization which leads to quantitative or qualitative error which adding the individual results.

As a result of the definition above the following attributes define electronic democratic parties:

- Self-conception towards the citizen as a service provider
- having no own experts on specialized political topics or domains
- Specialized knowledge is party-external
- Institutionalization of the participation of non-members
- being a provider for electronic services for political decision-finding and - making.
- Direction as regards content is oriented at the wishes of the system-users
- Party members do not practice their own lobbyist-politics
- Party program or platform describes a method to finding aims of political expression rather than a doctrinated program

4. Evaluation

The implementation of such a party concept can combine a large number of advantages of a direct democracy and a representative democracy. But anyway, this concept also has some disadvantages which should be overcome.

4.1. Benefits

Categorized into the scopes of technics, organization, law, economy, culture and politics (see [4]) it will be discussed how an electronic direct democratic party can arrange with actual basic conditions in todays political systems.

4.1.1. Advantages from a technical viewpoint. The existence of an infrastructure (hard-, soft- and knowware) must be provided by the party. The party has to ensure the development or the selection of a proper system. The quality will be better if there were more electronic parties competing due to normal market mechanisms when more providers are competing for the clients. In the best there should be different systems and parties to choose from. State-run systems have a monopoly. There is no need to improve less-important system areas within these monopoly systems. This is different at party-run services. Technical failures will be regulated by market-mechanisms. Bad systems will be removed from the market. If parties leave the market, other parties are going to replace them. But still the state should not risk or loose his technical trustworthiness.
The state can only introduce systems which are compliant to the equal treatment law. Every citizen must have an infrastructural access to the state-run systems. A party does not have to fit these criteria. The going-public can be done while still building-up the infrastructure of the party-users.

4.1.2. Advantages from the organizational viewpoint. Because of the decoupling from the organizational level of the party the decision-making processes for the operational politics can be conceived new and adopted for an effective and efficient use unlike the conventional methods. Transparency in the sense of a process-attendant measure for tracing is possible through filing and laid-open communication. Process-related deformations of the citizen’s wishes are minimized. Because decisions are about single issues and not about whole politics-packages, some normally occurring paradoxes do not occur, such as the Ostrogorsky or the Referendum paradox.

Processes according to the rules of a German Volksgesetzgebung (i.e. referendum) can be mapped. Signature collections can be avoided. The forum run by the party provides a link and contact between the citizens. If the delegates of the party form a fraction and have certain power in the parliament, the parameters of the electronic methods are the only criteria to bring a proposal successful to the process of legislation.

Virtual ballots can be held near-time. While conventional methods need very long and organizational intensive processes before the ballot, the electronic method are only limited by the amount of time for the ballot itself.

4.1.3. Advantages from the economic viewpoint. The total cost of ownership (personal costs, technic costs, training costs, ...), the initial capital outlay and the initial benefit from the system (rationalization, improvement of the quality and legitimation of the results, ...) got to have a sufficient ratio. The needed quality of the technical systems and the initial capital outlay are mainly determined by the user demands. The party just has to orientate their investment only at the current amount of system needed, not at future or ideal needs. Still market mechanisms and other parties will force the party to provide a better system than their direct rivals.

Even though it is a direct influence to the state-run politics, the state does not have any costs by these elements of direct-democracy. These costs will be paid fully by the direct democratic parties. On the other hand, the element of bribing and blackmailing parties with money will become useless because the party itself has no influence on the politics themselves. This leads to the point that parties providing no concrete politics or programs can be very attractive to support because of this independence and transparency of the processes. Only the concrete decision-process of citizens is supported.

The number of members of a party can be very low. Members should only keep the electronic-support systems running, they do not have to form a large party-basis for the concrete party-program and its enforcement. The amount and intensity of costly party conventions can be minimized.

4.1.4. Advantages from the cultural viewpoint. Cultural attributes of a electronic democratic party can be mainly seen in the following points. Each party has got its own view to technics, its own view to its role (Service provider vs. state, active vs. passive citizens) and different qualifications to participate in the political process. Conventional elements like votes provide cultural overall statements which can be compared to the electronic counterparts for authenticity.

The citizens are responsible for the results of the virtual ballots. The party only provides the process infrastructure. The political responsibility of mapping the results to the parliament lies with the delegates. The delegates have the best possible legitimation basis because of the results of a large collective decision-process. Every citizen could participate if he applies for access to the party-services. Seeing the long-term, we expect the amount of process participants to be a representative number of the people. The party-user votes should be equal to the opinion of the whole people which the conventional parties also adopt for their politics.

There is no party internal proxy system which provides a subjective aggregation of a group’s will. Deformations when mapping the results to the parliament will only result because of mathematical inferences there are not .5 members which could vote half for one position and half for another position.

The votes of the citizens which do not participate in the provided services are not lost. During the national elections they can choose form the parties and therefore assign the amount of power given to electronic democratic parties or conventional parties. This does not exclude the citizens from using the system. The problems of digital divide have no effects on electronic democratic parties.

The party itself has no party-platform or program and does not provide any issues as regards political content. The party is itself just a provider of services for the citizen. Conventional parties are subject to their program and tradition. Disagreeable results from direct ballots will be ignored. Agreeable results still have the permanent danger of being made up just for marketing-oriented reasons.

The political issues as regards content can only be made up by decision-making process participants. Intransparent work or lobby work is totally useless. This work must be applied directly to the citizen in order to take effect- which is nearly impossible and can be controlled by the citizen.
The only criteria for participation as a party-user will be the general voting eligibility. The user does not have to lay open whether he is member of a party or what he has voted for in the national state-run elections.

4.1.6. Advantages form a political viewpoint. The development, introduction and operation of the electronic supported processes need the will to change, the allocation of resources and changes in the legal frame work by the persons in charge.

The citizens can chose during the state-run national elections how much amount of direct democratic party they want or how much the provided concept should affect the political life in the future. The citizens announce their trust in the provided electronic system and their will to use these systems through the elections. Their demand scales the political weight of the provided concept.

A conventional people referendum provides thoroughly and 100 per cent agreed decisions by the people. Not every citizen wants to participate in those processes and prefer the services offered by conventional parties. The electronic democratic party still inherits all the benefits of the old-fashioned parties.

A citizen oriented presentation of the political contents is expected from the competing conventional parties. This should be provided through the parties and not through the electronic democratic party. Electronic democratic parties have to convince the citizen to support a proposal beyond the normal political parties. The proposal therefore has to provide a solid overview for the political situation concerning the proposal. The same is true for non governmental organizations.

4.2. Doubts towards electronic democratic parties

The general doubts towards a direct or electronic party are lowered when seeing that they are not enforced by exclusive bindingness. They only occur as much as the citizens vote for electronic democratic parties in the state-run elections.

4.2.1. Technical doubts. If the electronic democratic parties do not see other electronic parties as their competitors, the need to provide and establish good and reliable systems (soft- and hardware) will vanish. Promises about keeping to general standards are never binding.

The party has to provide an explicit disclaimer against the failure of their services. It should not be accountable. The damage done by lack of information or services can not be quantified or is payable. But this disclaimer undermines the implicit accurateness responsibility. The state cannot dispose itself of such responsibility when running e-Government services.

4.2.2. Cultural doubts. When the user support and the functions of the electronic systems do not work against there will be the danger that electronic democracy is only understood as a mouse-click democracy or a reality-game. The high number of issues and virtual ballots makes it impossible for the citizens to inform themselves about each issue and thoroughly find their opinion. This is, by the way, a problem which is also common with the delegates of conventional parties.

The users got to trust the electronic parties in the manner of the responsibility for their private data like age, name, address, mail etc. Analysis and interpretation of the gathered voting profiles can provide a useful personality profile which can be particularly useful in the economic sector. Even if the used system of a party is meant to be very secure and safe, the user must have the opportunity to check the system.

4.2.3. Organizational and legal doubts. The governmental power of a consequent ideal electronic democratic party cannot be ensured from the organizational viewpoint. It is unrealistic that citizens could drive the daily basis of governments through permanent online-ballots. Therefore it is necessary to go back to concrete politics packages and party-platforms and programs with general issues where the executive power can orientate to ensure they can act.

Governmental power capability is a formal specification to be accepted for state-run ballots in Germany.

4.2.4. Political doubts. When introducing and realizing state-run e-democracy concepts, a number of representatives and delegates must be convinced of the concepts and necessity of those processes. The citizens are not affected in this process. An intensive introduction of all deciding groups to the issue of electronic democracy is possible so and a safe technical system can be chosen.
Electronic democratic parties must bring up own resources for finance and organization in order to fulfill the German 5 per cent limit. In Germany, only parties reaching countrywide more than 5 per cent or fulfilling other special conditions can form an own fraction in the parliament. Otherwise, there can only be direct delegates which do not have the special right of a fraction. The sound process of finding a system is therefore replaced by old-fashioned election campaigns. Attracting the citizens fast will become a criteria, the aspect of quality for the system will suffer from this. It should only be attractive.

4.2.5. Economical doubts. It is a problem that there are no known standard or definition for operating electronic democratic systems for communication between citizen and parties. So there is no known financial barrier to enter the market for electronic democratic parties. Financial resources are better invested into the election campaign than in the system because the system has no use for the party and the party-users when the party is not voted for enough. Parties primary looking for political quality are inferior to campaign-oriented parties. The e-democracy understanding of the citizens could suffer from these facts because the public will administer bad technical solutions which just catch attention but lack substance.

5. Outlook

The concept provided in this paper is political oriented. It should therefore be treated with care. Just by transferring the concept to real life and taking the concept from the theory to the real political life can prove this usefulness and existence capability. Conventional parties can never fulfill those requirements and will never adopt. A view looking at the German parties and direct-democracy related organizations only shows one party which can fit into the concept up to now (see [11][12]).

Because the political work for the party is very much altruistic and not calculable, many interest groups and lobbyists for certain themes (Union politics, globalization, ecological groups, ...) are not interested in electronic democratic concepts. This is true for the build-up and maintenance of the services phase. Regarding their roles as party-users, these groups or member of the groups could be interested in using the good direct conditions to politically enforce their opinion through direct democratic concepts.

A democratic electronic party can only act as a service provider for a number of citizens and relies on their support and use for establishing and keeping up the services and existence. This is a situation which is uncommon to parties. Another important factor is that the citizens can choose how much direct electronic democratic interaction they want in the political process an how these elements of interaction should be defined and established. This situation is very close linked to the ideal of electronic democracy where the citizens have to participate in the selection of electronic supported decision-making processes.

References


Bundesrepublik Deutschland in zwei Bänden, pages 3–59.
