

Emerging Infrastructures for E-democracy: In Search of Strong Inscriptions

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Abstract: In 2000, the Swedish government Official Report on Democracy served as the starting point for a nation-wide development towards systematic trials using IT for enhancing local democracy. Particularly favored were projects aiming at implementing deliberative democracy. This paper presents case studies from four Swedish municipalities, which exhibit different approaches to the problem of building infrastructures for e-democracy. The projects represent the most ambitious local democracy projects in Sweden yet; still as democratic patterns change slowly they are at quite an early stage of development. In this paper, we look at the projects from the point of view of their success in establishing an information infrastructure, the underlying idea being that “e-democracy” should be discussed in terms of its defining processes, not to which extent IT artifacts are used. We explore the projects for the purpose of assessing the strength of the “inscriptions” made so far. The study shows that the different projects inscribe different democratic behavior, which is discussed in terms of three ideal types of democracy, the “strong”, “thin” and “quick” models, and in terms of the different actor-networks they have managed to enroll.

Keywords: e-democracy, infrastructure, inscription, democracy model, participation